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DHS funding is running out. Will the House save the day?

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The House and DHS



House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana). (Matt McClain/The Washington Post)

A return to long airport lines could be on the horizon.

Congress still hasn't passed funding for the Department of Homeland Security, and the emergency funds used to pay DHS staffers are set to run out by early next month. As you probably remember, the last time TSA agents stopped getting paid, many agents stopped showing up to work to make ends meet, leading to long lines and confusion at airports. It was a political disaster for Congress.

But don't expect a resolution too soon. The House is taking early steps toward funding the agency this week, but the path forward is rife with pitfalls.

Let's refresh. The Senate agreed earlier this month to pass most DHS funding through a bipartisan bill. But in light of Democrats' opposition to funding the department's immigration operations, the Senate bill excluded funding for ICE and Customs and Border Protection.

Republicans plan to include funding for those parts of the department in a bill they would pass on their own. To get past the filibuster, the bill will require a special procedure in the Senate called budget reconciliation that starts with passing a budget resolution (a sort of blueprint of how Congress plans to set the federal budget). It's the same procedure Republicans used to pass the One Big Beautiful Bill last year.

The Senate voted on the Republican budget resolution last week and the larger DHS funding bill earlier this month.

Now it's the House's turn, and it's not looking like it'll be quite so smooth. First off, House Republicans refuse to pass the main DHS funding bill until after the immigration-focused reconciliation bill. Immigration enforcement is a top priority for many in the conference, and they don't want to risk it falling by the wayside.

“We were born at night but not last night,” House Budget Committee Chair **Jodey Arrington** (R-Texas) said last night. “It would be naive in this town to say, ‘trust us, vote to turn all of Homeland on except for ICE and CBP.’”

Johnson is planning to have a vote on the budget resolution tomorrow. That will kick-start the process that eventually allows a vote on the reconciliation bill.

But here's the hiccup. It's rare for Republicans to have a chance to pass a bill with a simple majority in both the House and Senate, so some Republicans want to squeeze in their other priorities. Rep. **Chip Roy** (R-Texas), policy chair of the House Freedom Caucus, wants assurances that the reconciliation process will also include legislation

building a new White House ballroom, revamping election security and barring trans athletes in schools.

Johnson has indicated he wants to keep the bill focused on funding federal immigration enforcement. If too many unrelated priorities are included, it risks derailing the whole thing.

“I don’t think Border Patrol and ICE should be isolated,” Roy said last night. “I understand the argument. [Johnson says] it’s the only way to fund them. That’s not my fault.”

Republican leadership told members during a GOP conference meeting last night that they would have their chance to pass their other priorities in a third reconciliation bill later this year. But pulling off reconciliation often requires months of negotiations, and we’re coming up on campaign season soon, when members take long breaks to meet with voters. Sen. **John Neely Kennedy** (R-Louisiana) even quipped that anyone believing Congress would pull off a third reconciliation bill ahead of the midterms was “smoking the Devil’s lettuce.”

Arrington, who supports Johnson’s plan of having another reconciliation bill after the DHS one, said he’s sympathetic to the skepticism. A reconciliation bill with a policy anchor as compelling to

Republicans as immigration enforcement can propel it to the finish line. But a hodgepodge collection of random Republican priorities? Probably less so.

“It’s a lot easier to keep some of the folks that we need to keep intact ... when we have the motivation of funding Homeland Security and ICE and CBP,” Arrington said.

As for the larger DHS funding bill, it’s unclear when a vote on that would be, especially after Johnson put some cold water on the version the Senate passed earlier this month. Speaking with reporters yesterday, he called it “haphazardly drafted.” **Riley Beggin** has more on that bill being at risk here.

Senate Majority Leader **John Thune** rebutted yesterday: “I think we did everything we can to ensure that everything is appropriately funded. ... and hopefully that’ll be enough to get the House in a concrete position.”

Riley Beggin and Theodoric Meyer contributed reporting.