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Johnson vs. Jeffries on Iran funding

The House and Senate have both canceled their votes for the evening because of the storm threatening Washington. Roughly 30% of all flights into Washington-Reagan National Airport have been canceled today.

Let's focus on the two House leaders this evening, who braved the weather and made it to the Capitol.

Speaker Mike Johnson. The speaker inched ever closer to saying that he'll try to put a large-scale Iran war funding bill in a reconciliation package. Johnson detailed the outlines for a path to approve tens or hundreds of billions of dollars to fund the Pentagon and the U.S. war in the Middle East on a party-line vote.

"As you know, I'm very insistent upon a reconciliation package, and we're trying to find the final provisions of it everybody can agree to," Johnson told us Monday afternoon. "I think defense spending could be a part of that, but we have to wait. You know, the details are coming together."

Johnson's comments reflect the reality that reconciliation may be the only viable path for Republicans to pass an Iran war package, given staunch Democratic opposition.

Johnson has been one of the leading proponents of trying to pass another reconciliation bill. The Louisiana Republican doesn't want to waste a vehicle that the Senate could pass under a simple majority threshold. House Budget Committee Chair Jodey Arrington (R-Texas) has also been hot on using reconciliation and has started to work on cobbling together budget cuts that could pair with the package.

Senate Majority Leader John Thune has been cool to the idea of another reconciliation bill, but Senate Budget Committee Chair Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) — one of the war's biggest cheerleaders — has long tried to cobble together another reconciliation bill.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries. Jeffries made clear that Johnson has no other option but to use reconciliation to pass a massive package to pay for President Donald Trump's campaign against Iran.

During a news conference in the Capitol, Jeffries said that the Trump administration "has not even made the case to the American people as to why we are spending billions of dollars in dropping bombs every day in Iran, while at the same period of time doing nothing about the affordability crisis, which Donald Trump continues to insist is a hoax."

Jeffries repeatedly called the war in Iran "a war of choice" and said Trump's decision to go to war in Iran was "reckless." The conflict, Jeffries said, could go on for "months or years."

The New York Democrat also said Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth is “the most unqualified secretary of defense in American history.”

“The notion that they would come up here and ask for additional money is beyond the pale at this moment, start by explaining why we’re in this to begin with, because they failed in that regard,” Jeffries said.

Interestingly, Jeffries weighed in on Hegseth, urging David Ellison to take over CNN quickly, saying it would put “a target on the back” of the merger of Warner Bros. and Paramount Skydance. Jeffries said Hegseth seems to want to make CNN “state television.”

“It’s an irresponsible thing for them to do, even if they’re trying to bring these things about. Because now the scrutiny level is just going to increase exponentially. That’s what Pete Hegseth has accomplished. That’s what the chair of the FCC has accomplished. As opposed to complaining about media coverage for their deeply unpopular war of choice in the Middle East, perhaps they should actually plan to keep American troops – men and women – safe. Because clearly that has not happened to the degree that it needs to.”

- *Jake Sherman, Andrew Desiderio*