Federal shutdown ends as Democrats cave in to Trump

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The US Senate and House of Representatives voted Monday to approve a short-term budget resolution, putting an end to the partial shutdown of the federal government that began midnight Friday night. The deal leaves 800,000 DACA recipients without protection in what amounts to a total capitulation by Democrats to Trump and the Republicans.

The Senate passed the three-week "continuing resolution," authorizing federal government spending through February 8, by a vote of 81-18, with large majorities of both big-business parties supporting the bill: 48-2 for Republicans, 33-16 for Democrats.

The House of Representatives passed the bill an hour later, by a margin of 266-150, with 45 Democrats joining a near-unanimous Republican caucus to send the legislation to the White House for Trump's signature.

The bill incorporates only one long-term policy action, reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program, which covers nine million children in low-income families, for another six years. Both parties allowed CHIP authorization to expire when the fiscal year began October 1, and half a dozen states have already begun notifying families of significant cutbacks in the program, set to begin by the end of this month.

The CHIP extension was added to the continuing resolution that passed the House last week and was blocked in the Senate by a Democratic filibuster, carried out supposedly to demand the legalization of so-called "Dreamers," undocumented immigrants brought to this country as children and protected against deportation under the DACA program.

President Trump rescinded the executive order that was the basis of DACA, with the action to take effect March 5, when the Immigration and Customs Enforcement could begin rounding up DACA recipients using the personal information they had to supply to the government in order to be covered by the program.

In the annals of cowardly capitulations, there are few spectacles that can match Monday's collapse by the Democratic Party, which abandoned its blockade against the budget resolution less than 72 hours after it began. Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer announced the decision in a brief, nearly blubbering speech on the Senate floor, which combined phony invective directed against Trump with a complete surrender to the bigot-in-chief in the White House.

In the end, the filibuster obtained only one "concession" from the Republicans: Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell pledged publicly to allow a debate and vote on stand-alone legislation to deal with the DACA issue after February 8 if there is not a DACA provision in the final budget resolution.

Even if he were to keep his promise, House Speaker Paul Ryan has already declared that no DACA legislation will be brought up before the House of Representatives unless it has White House support—meaning that the bill would have to incorporate the full panoply of Trump's anti-immigrant program, including the wall along the US-Mexico border, a massive buildup of the border and immigration police, and strict new curbs on legal immigration.

DACA recipients are living in a state of anger and anxiety. "Stupid Republicans. I hate Democrats for caving in, too," wrote one DACA recipient on social media. "Don't trust Chuck," wrote another, referring to Senator Schumer. "I woke up at 3:30 last night and wasn't able to go back to sleep with all this mess. I've lost a few pounds just worrying," wrote one young woman.

The surrender was not Schumer's individual decision, but the action of the entire Democratic caucus, which had no stomach for any serious fight. At a lengthy closed-door meeting of the Senate Democrats on Monday morning, it was clear that many more than the 12 required to break a filibuster were going to vote to support the budget

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resolution.

The minority of the Democratic caucus who voted against the surrender did so to preserve whatever fig leaf they could of credibility as defenders of the immigrant population. All six Senate Democrats who have been mentioned as possible 2020 presidential candidates, including Bernie Sanders, Elizabeth Warren, Kamala Harris, and Cory Booker, adopted this two-faced approach.

In the wake of the debacle, two of the most right-wing Senate Democrats, Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Doug Jones of Alabama, went to the White House for talks with Trump on the immigration issue.

The desertion of the DACA recipients by the Senate Democrats was entirely predictable. During 2009-2010, when the Democrats controlled the White House and Congress with a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate, they took no action on immigration, focusing instead on bailing out Wall Street and enacting Obama's reactionary health care counter-reform.

Obama only finally issued the executive order on DACA as a political maneuver to boost his reelection campaign in 2012. The Democrats are quite willing to shed tears over DACA recipients for electoral purposes in the Hispanic community, but Obama deported more undocumented immigrants than all previous presidents combined.

With the installation of Trump in the White House, after a campaign in which he made racist bigotry against immigrants a central focus, the Democrats have only sabotaged efforts to fight back. In the course of the past year, they never made a significant issue of DACA, compared to their single-minded focus on the anti-Russian campaign.

In the months since Trump announced the rescinding of DACA, the Democrats have also been more interested in the #MeToo campaign of increasingly reckless and largely unproven allegations of sexual harassment, which has targeted both Republicans and Democrats in Washington.

These priorities are not the result merely of the choices made by Schumer, his deputy Richard Durbin, and House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi. The focus of the Democrats on the anti-Russia campaign, and their indifference to the impending disaster facing DACA recipients, points to the basic political character of the Democratic Party, a capitalist party whose policies are set by Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus.

The media apologists for the Democratic Party on such cable networks as CNN and MSNBC were largely at a loss Monday afternoon, unable to conceal the scale of the capitulation and the demoralizing impact this was likely to have on the electoral prospects of the Democratic Party in 2018.

The *New York Times* was the first Democratic Party house organ to attempt transforming this debacle into a mini-triumph, in an editorial published Monday evening, beginning with the words, "Thank goodness that's over," followed by a series of complaints about Trump's bad faith and inconsistency in negotiations.

Claiming there were no winners to the shutdown—Trump and the Republicans, of course, would beg to differ—the *Times* wrote, "Nonetheless, the spotlight is now where it should be: on the failure of President Trump and Republicans in Congress to take care of the Dreamers, despite their repeated claims that they want to."

Perhaps the most shameless response came from Bernie Sanders, who sent out an email fundraising appeal only minutes after the continuing resolution passed the House and went to the White House, denouncing "the right-wing extremist agenda that Republican rule in Washington is forcing on the nation," and saying nothing at all about the collaboration of the Democrats with that agenda.

Sanders reiterated his call to "take back the Congress in 2018 from these extremists," declaring that he would be traveling the country to stump for Democrats running for state and national office and would seek to engage those who supported his presidential campaign in 2016 in that effort.

Sanders draws no conclusions from the Democratic Party capitulation Monday. On the contrary, the focus of his political activity is to block the development of an independent political movement of the working class that would challenge both the Democrats and the Republicans on the basis of a socialist and international program. The struggle to build such a movement is the central political orientation of the Socialist Equality Party.

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