

Far-right Republicans block short-term funding proposal, increasing chance of government shutdown

Jacob Crosse, Barry Grey
19 September 2023

Republican infighting continued on Tuesday, portending a government shutdown on October 1 amid an intensification of the US political crisis. Two different votes scheduled by Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy to demonstrate Republican unity failed to obtain passage on Tuesday due to opposition from far-right members of his party, who are operating in league with ex-President Donald Trump.

For the second time in the past week, Republicans failed to advance a rules package that would allow debate to begin on an astronomical \$886 billion fiscal year 2024 budget for the Department of Defense. Republican Representatives Andy Biggs (Arizona), Dan Bishop (North Carolina), Ken Buck (Colorado), Ralph Norman (South Carolina) and Matt Rosendale (Montana) voted with every Democrat to block the procedural vote.

Opposition to the rules package by both Democrats and Republicans is not based on opposition to record funding for the military. The far-right Republicans who voted “no” are opposing the rules package in order to extract more domestic spending cuts on programs that benefit the working class. The Democrats, who support the record annual Pentagon budget, voted “no” to keep the conflict within the GOP going.

Prior to the failed procedural vote, McCarthy suffered another defeat when a previously scheduled vote to advance a continuing resolution (CR) aimed at funding the government through the end of the October met with continued opposition by fascistic members of the House Freedom Caucus, who are working in tandem with Trump.

Some 20 far-right House Republicans in the last 48 hours have publicly or privately voiced their intention to oppose the CR co-authored by Florida Republican Rep. Byron Donalds. Under the CR put forward by Donalds, who has endorsed Trump for president in 2024, all non-military accounts would see an 8.1 percent cut, with the exception of the Department of Veteran Affairs. The Donalds CR intensifies the war against immigrants, providing more funding for border wall

construction and reinstating family detention policies.

Even were the CR to obtain unanimous Republican support, it would have zero chance of being passed by the Democratic-controlled Senate because it does not explicitly provide additional funding for the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, and includes such sweeping and immediate cuts in social programs as to torpedo President Biden’s reelection bid. The Democratic administration has already imposed brutal social cuts, primarily by terminating COVID-related benefits on the spurious grounds that the pandemic, which is once again surging and continuing to kill and maim tens of thousands in the US every week, has ended.

The Democrats will inevitably intensify their austerity agenda to make the working class pay for the escalating war against Russia and preparations for war against China but seek to utilize the trade union bureaucracy to suppress the opposition of workers while they prepare more repressive measures in a second Biden term.

Roll Call reported that the CR which McCarthy and most House Republicans are trying to get passed would actually provide additional funding for the Ukraine war, even though it contains no explicit provision to do so. That is because, in the words of *Roll Call*, it would “give the military brass extraordinary flexibility.”

The publication continues: “The CR would allow the Pentagon to spend *whatever is necessary*, as though the House’s fiscal 2024 [Pentagon funding] bill had become law instead.” (Emphasis added.)

In the event of a shutdown, “non-essential” government employees would be furloughed and the ability of federal agencies such as the US Department of Agriculture to administer social programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps), which benefit millions of workers and their families, would be threatened. While the police, military and intelligence apparatus would continue to receive funding, certain regulatory agencies that carry out inspections, like the Environmental Protection Agency and the

Food and Drug Administration, would be paused.

Roll Call reported that the proposed CR omits “a provision that makes additional funds for the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children available, which advocates say will result in beneficiaries being turned away this fall.”

A group of far-right Republicans, led by Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz and Georgia Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, made it clear they would not support Donalds’ CR or any other CR that would avert a government shut-down on October 1.

Speaking from the House floor on Tuesday, Gaetz said, “I am not voting for a continuing resolution. I am not voting to continue the failure, and the waste, and the corruption, and the election interference...” The latter was a reference to the criminal prosecutions of Trump for seeking to overturn the 2020 election and illegally holding classified documents being carried out by Justice Department Special Counsel Jack Smith.

Gaetz called for defunding and ending any prosecutions or investigations into Trump or his co-conspirators for seeking to overturn the 2020 election. Although no GOP lawmakers have been indicted in connection with the January 6, 2021 attempted coup, many Republican members of the House and Senate, including Gaetz, were complicit.

Hopping from the House floor to Steve Bannon’s *WarRoom* program, Gaetz continued to call for ending all criminal investigations into Trump and his fascist foot soldiers as part of any funding proposal. He told Trump’s one-time White House adviser Bannon that Attorney General Merrick Garland “knows... the money is still going to be in the bank account for him to be able to fund Jack Smith and every other weaponized endeavor we see, from the January 6 political prisoners and beyond.”

In Trump’s more than hour-long interview with Kristen Welker of *Meet The Press* on Sunday, which aired prior to the unveiling of the CR, Trump gave fascistic Republicans the green light to shut down the government. “I’d shut down the government if they can’t make an appropriate deal, absolutely,” he said.

Amidst a failed Ukrainian counteroffensive, a strike by autoworkers that threatens to spiral out of the control of the Shawn Fain UAW bureaucracy, and cratering support for Joe Biden among prospective 2024 voters, Trump and his far-right allies are seeking to further destabilize the government.

The political responsibility for the outsized influence of the openly fascistic wing of the Republican Party rests with Biden and the Democrats, who have systematically worked to cover up the complicity of the Republican Party, as well as sections of the military, police, FBI, financial elite, corporate media and

US Supreme Court, in the attempted coup of January 6 and the ongoing conspiracy to establish a dictatorship.

Even now, with Trump and his allies in Congress seeking to create the maximum level of havoc in advance of the 2024 elections, the mantra of Biden and the Democrats continues to be an appeal for bipartisan unity and a “strong Republican Party” in order to conduct the war against Russia and suppress the working class at home.

In a speech last Thursday in a Maryland suburb of Washington D.C., Biden touted “Bidenomics” and boasted of the “strongest economy ever.” This came just two days after the US Census Bureau reported that child poverty in the US more than doubled in 2022, hitting 12.4 percent, and overall poverty increased by 4.6 percentage points to reach 12.4 percent, the first increase since 2010. Income inequality was greater than in 2019.

In fact, over the past year, Biden has combined tens of billions of dollars in military aid to Ukraine and hundreds of billions in subsidies to bail out collapsing banks and cover the losses of big depositors with deep and cruel cuts in social programs impacting millions of workers and youth. The social cuts include food stamps, Medicaid and the resumption of payments on university student loans.

At the same time, Biden has backed the Federal Reserve policy of raising interest rates to lower inflation by fueling unemployment and undercutting workers’ wage demands.

This, however, is deemed a drop in the bucket compared to the social devastation required to prosecute US imperialism’s wars in Europe and Asia while propping up the global position of the dollar. Such levels of social inequality and mass poverty are incompatible with democracy. The ruling class is lurching toward dictatorial forms of rule.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact