

Democrats will allow full ICE funding in budget bill

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House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries told a closed-door meeting of congressional Democrats that while he would personally oppose legislation to fund the Department of Homeland Security for the remainder of the fiscal year—through September 30—the Democratic leadership would not seek to whip the vote, now set for Thursday.

The effect of this move is to ensure passage of full funding for the DHS and, in particular, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), in the wake of the murder of Renée Nicole Good by an ICE agent in Minneapolis on January 7, and the full-scale occupation of the Twin Cities by thousands of federal agents.

The *American Prospect* reported that several Democrats in closely contested districts would be voting for the ICE appropriation. “They’re terrified of being labeled anti-law enforcement,” an unnamed source told the liberal magazine. “They want this to go away so they can talk about the cost of living more. Problem is, it’s not going away.”

Through backroom maneuvers with House Speaker Mike Johnson and other top Republicans, the magazine reported, “Democratic leadership worked it so that the DHS appropriations bill will get a separate vote from the other three bills in the package released on Tuesday. While a full four-bill package may have needed support from House Democrats, the DHS appropriation alone, with its meager accountability measures and funding for immigration enforcement, can be expected to get full support from House Republicans.”

It is notable that Jeffries did impose the party whip on votes related to the government shutdown of October-November last year. He has chosen not to do so in the impending vote on the DHS budget. The report continued:

The Hill source told the *Prospect* that in general, Democratic leadership was uninterested in fighting on the issue of ICE and immigration enforcement. “They’ll just yell at Trump as he escalates and hope people forget and don’t punish them for failing to use what little power they had when it mattered,” the source said.

It is not electoral calculations that drive this two-faced policy. Trump’s persecution of immigrants is deeply unpopular, and more Americans favor abolishing ICE entirely than allowing it to continue its vicious operations, according to recent opinion polls. The Democratic leadership won’t block funding for ICE because it regards both ICE and DHS as a whole as critical parts of the machinery of the capitalist state, which they, like the Republicans, uphold and support.

The legislative situation barely a week before the shutdown is still highly uncertain. Congress has just approved a so-called “minibus,” a bill to provide full-year funding for the Interior, Justice and Commerce departments, the Environmental Protection Agency and some scientific agencies, for a total of \$180 billion.

The bill was adopted by huge bipartisan majorities, passing the House of Representatives January 8 by a vote of 397-28 and passing the Senate a week later, by a vote of 82-15. Only six Democrats voted “no” in the House, including only one “left,” Rashida Tlaib. The 15 Senate “no” votes included 11 Democrats, among them Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren.

Both Democratic senators from Minnesota and all four Democratic House members from that state, including Ilhan Omar of Minneapolis, voted for the funding bill. Other “left” Democrats in the House who supported the legislation included Alexandria Ocasio-

Cortez of New York and Greg Casar of Texas, both members of the Democratic Socialists of America, and Pramila Jayapal, chair of the Progressive Caucus.

Passage of the “minibus” still leaves six of the 12 annual appropriations bills required to fund the government. The departments still threatened with partial shutdown include three of the largest: Defense, Homeland Security, and Health and Human Services (HHS), as well as Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Labor, Education and State. Senate and House leaders in both capitalist parties are working out the terms of several multi-department bills to be passed before January 30.

The legislation ending the October-November shutdown included full-year appropriations for the Agriculture and Veterans Affairs departments, as well as for military construction and the operations of Congress itself. All other funding was continued at fiscal year 2025 levels until January 30, when spending authorization would expire.

Congressional appropriations committee leaders reached agreement January 19 on a second three-bill minibus that would fund most domestic social spending, including the departments of Labor, HHS, Education, Transportation and HUD, but the bill has not yet been formally adopted by either house of Congress.

There is little likelihood that Congress will allow spending authorization for the Pentagon or DHS to expire, particularly in the midst of nearly continuous US military operations in the Caribbean against Venezuela and against multiple targets in the Middle East. The Pentagon authorization will top \$900 billion, while the DHS is to receive nearly \$108 billion.

Even if the Democrats were to delay funding for DHS, as a political stunt directed toward the 2026 midterm elections, there would be no effect on ICE operations. The agency received a huge increase provided by Trump’s “One Big Beautiful Bill” (OBBA), passed last summer, giving it virtually unlimited resources for arrests, detentions and deportations.

Under OBBA, the budget for ICE skyrocketed from \$10 billion to \$75 billion, divided into \$30 billion for operations—the raids that are currently devastating city after city—and \$45 billion for detention facilities, the massive concentration camps that are expected to hold

hundreds of thousands, and even millions, of immigrant detainees.

ICE has already become the most-funded federal police force, more than doubling in size to 22,000. In terms of the number of agents, it trails only Customs and Border Protection (CBP), with 47,000. Both agencies have been mobilized for massive sweeps through targeted cities, with Minneapolis-St. Paul occupied for the past two months, and Portland and Lewiston, Maine facing anti-migrant sweeps this week.



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