

# House conservatives flirt with shutdown: ‘So be it’

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Congress is racing the clock to fund the government ahead of a Sept. 30 deadline as the threat of a shutdown looms — but to some House conservatives, a shutdown isn’t much of a threat at all.

A handful of hard-line Republicans are brushing off — or even embracing — the possibility of a shutdown, arguing that bringing the government to a screeching halt is more acceptable than allowing the country to continue on its current spending trajectory.

“If a shutdown occurs, then so be it if they’re not gonna stick to what [Speaker [Kevin McCarthy](#) (R-Calif.)] agreed to, which is starting on a path of financial security, which we don’t have,” Rep. [Ralph Norman](#) (R-S.C.) told The Hill in an interview.

Rep. [Bob Good](#) (R-Va.) — who in July said “we should not fear a government shutdown” — went even further when talking to The Hill last week.

“Eighty-five percent or so of the government continues to operate, and most Americans won’t even miss it,” Good said. “And if that’s the leverage that we need to utilize to force the Democrats to accept spending cuts and an end to the harmful policies that are, again, crushing the American people — I mean, then we need to do that.”

While the Republicans flirting with a shutdown are a tiny minority within the GOP conference, they add another layer of complication for McCarthy as he works to keep the lights on in Washington without angering his right flank, who are pushing for steeper spending cuts and policy additions as part of the appropriations process.

McCarthy is [asking House Republicans to help him pass](#) a “short-term” continuing resolution, or CR, to fund the government beyond Sept. 30 as both chambers slog through the government funding process. The House has [cleared just one](#) of 12 regular appropriations bills, while the Senate has not gotten any past the finish line. The House will be in session for just 11 legislative days until the end of fiscal 2023.

“I don’t think anybody wants a government shutdown,” McCarthy told reporters in Syracuse, N.Y., last week.

As the calendar inches closer to the end-of-September deadline, McCarthy is utilizing an argument that could appeal to some conservatives: warning about the ramifications a shutdown may have on the conference’s investigations into the Biden administration.

He cautioned that the probes into Hunter Biden and the Biden family's foreign business dealings — which McCarthy said could soon develop into an impeachment inquiry as a “natural step forward” — would be halted.

“So I would actually like to have a short-term CR, only to make our arguments stronger,” McCarthy said on Fox's “Sunday Morning Futures.” “If we shut down, all the government shuts it down, investigation and everything else. It hurts the American public.”

House Oversight and Accountability Committee Chairman James Comer (R-Ky.), who is leading the House's probe into the Biden family businesses, also warned about the effects of a shutdown.

“Any type of shutdown would ... interfere with our investigation. Any excuse the Biden administration can give not to be transparent with the House Oversight Committee, they're gonna take that,” Comer said Tuesday on Fox Business.

But some hard-line conservatives are balking at that analysis.

“We are not going to be distracted by a shiny object saying, ‘if you don't get this continuing resolution passed, we won't be able to pursue the impeachment inquiry,’” Rep. Matt Rosendale (R-Mont.) said Monday on Fox Business. “That's nonsense.”

Conservatives have laid out demands not only for government funding as a whole, but for a stopgap bill to keep the government open.

Last week, the House Freedom Caucus released an official position opposing a continuing resolution without significant policy reforms on the border, Department of Justice and “woke policies in the Pentagon,” while re-upping their demand that top-line spending is chopped down further than levels in currently drafted bills.

If those requests are not met, Norman said, a shutdown would be an acceptable byproduct.

“We've made it clear, you've seen the letter the Freedom Caucus sent out, \$1.4 trillion limit, no rescissions to plus-up the appropriations. And we're opposing a CR. And if a byproduct is the shutdown of the government, then so be it,” Norman said.

With around three dozen members of the House Freedom Caucus and just a slim House GOP majority, unified opposition from the hard-line conservative group could sink a stopgap measure unless it wins Democratic support — a prospect that remains unclear.

And it is unlikely that the Democratic-controlled Senate will agree to the Freedom Caucus demands — a dynamic that makes other Republicans willing to compromise for the sake of keeping the government open.

“I believe that we have an obligation to fund the government, and I will reach a compromise with whoever I have to to make sure that the government continues running,” Rep. [Darrell Issa](#) (R-Calif.), a 22-year veteran in the House, told reporters Tuesday at the Capitol.

“If there’s a shutdown, then quite frankly, you know — I will live through it; I’ve lived through a number of them, but I don’t think it’s constructive and neither does the Speaker,” he later added.

Rep. Morgan Griffith (R-Va.), a member of the Freedom Caucus along with Norman and Good, said he doesn’t think a shutdown is the right course of action, but the talk of one could help move the ball forward as the appropriations process slowly progresses.

“I don’t think it’s good for the country to have a shutdown, but sometimes it’s good for some members to make rhetoric about a possible shutdown because then maybe we can get everybody to come to some kind of agreement that makes sense for the American people,” Griffith said earlier this month.

While some members like Good see the threat of a shutdown as a potential leverage point, the chance of a shutdown backfiring is well within the realm of possibility.

“Shutdowns are unpredictable,” said Ryan Walker, the acting executive director and vice president of government relations for Heritage Action for America, the advocacy arm of the conservative think tank. “It’s hard to discern where the American public are going to place blame.”

But Walker added that while his organization would not take a position on a government shutdown, “the frustration is real.”

“There are members from all across the spectrum who have simply had enough, and they want to change,” Walker said. “A CR is a continuation of the Biden administration spending and does nothing on policy.”

Democrats, for their part, are slamming Republicans who say they are unbothered by a shutdown, arguing that the behavior from conservatives in the House is out of touch.

“I think it’s irresponsible, and I think it’s cruel,” Sen. Tammy Duckworth (D-Ill.) told reporters Tuesday in the Capitol.

“This is not a responsible way to run a government, and certainly for them to very flippantly say so be it shows how out of touch they are with what we need to do to govern and really support the American people,” she added.

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