

# Youngkin downplays shutdown threat, which hits just as Va. voting begins

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By [Gregory S. Schneider](#)

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Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) at a campaign event Thursday in Petersburg, Va. (Gregory S. Schneider/The Washington Post)

PETERSBURG, Va. — Gov. Glenn Youngkin (R) said Thursday that Virginians are “really suffering” at the prospect of a federal government shutdown but counseled patience as his fellow Republicans try to work out their differences in Congress, though earlier this week he blamed the situation on [President Biden](#).

A government shutdown would hit especially hard in Virginia, which has more than 140,000 federal civilian employees — trailing only California among states — as well as large military bases. With the current federal budget running out at the end of September, a shutdown seems increasingly probable as a few hard-right Republicans in the House of Representatives prevent GOP leadership from producing a spending plan.

A major shutdown in 2013 was also blamed on Republicans and widely said to have cost the GOP in Virginia elections that year, with Democrat Terry McAuliffe narrowly defeating Republican Ken Cuccinelli for governor.

[House Republicans falter on funding plans as shutdown inches closer](#)

This year, the potential shutdown looms as Virginians begin early voting on Friday for Nov. 7 elections in which all 140 seats in the General Assembly are on the ballot. Youngkin is pulling out all the stops to try to gain Republican control of the legislature, which is currently split, with a GOP-run House and Democratic-controlled Senate.

A government shutdown, depriving Virginia families of paychecks as Republican lawmakers fight among themselves, would make Youngkin’s quest more difficult, said Mark Rozell, dean of the Schar School of Policy and Government at George Mason University. “The MAGA Republicans in Washington are handing a gift to Virginia Democrats this year,” he said.

And Democrats on the campaign trail are wasting no time painting Republicans as extremists. A member of Virginia’s own congressional delegation has played a role in the stalemate, with Rep. Bob Good (R) [saying over the summer](#) that “we should not fear a government shutdown. Most of what we do up here is bad anyway.”

“It’s our prayer they figure it out before it cuts too deep, particularly right here in the commonwealth,” state Sen. Lamont Bagby (D-Richmond), the head of the Virginia Legislative Black Caucus, said Thursday at a campaign event in Henrico County. But, he added, “Voters aren’t stupid. Virginians understand what’s at stake” and will vote accordingly.

“I don’t know why they would go and support a party that put them out of work,” Sen. Richard L. Saslaw (D-Fairfax) said in an interview. Sen. Scott A. Surovell (D-Fairfax) noted that fellow Sen. Aaron R. Rouse (D-Virginia Beach) carried a bill this year that would have provided a 30-day stay of eviction and foreclosure proceedings for residents who are furloughed by the federal government. The bill passed the Senate unanimously but was killed in a Republican-controlled House subcommittee.

U.S. Sen. Tim Kaine (D-Va.) called Thursday for a resolution to the situation, noting that a brief shutdown in 2018-2019 caused 380,000 furloughs among government employees. “It’s unacceptable that there are some Republicans in the House who are willing to shut down the government if they don’t get everything they want. We need to come together to pass a bipartisan bill to fund the government past September 30,” Kaine said in a written statement.

Youngkin has drawn partisan criticism recently for staying largely mum on an issue of such consequence to the state. In 2013, by comparison, Gov. Robert “Bob” McDonnell (R) was much harsher on his fellow Republicans, calling a news conference as a shutdown loomed to warn of its dangers. McDonnell faulted the Obama administration for not engaging on entitlement reform, but hammered Republicans for budgetary brinkmanship.

“Look, I am no fan at all of Obamacare,” McDonnell said at the time. “But it is absolutely wrong to shut down the government.”

#### McDonnell blasts all sides in looming shutdown

Youngkin, speaking briefly Thursday after a political campaign event in Petersburg, pointed out that nine days remained before the government would run out of money without a congressional deal. “Let’s just see how these next nine days play out,” he said. “The state’s in good shape. We’ll be fine. But it’s people that really ... I know are anxious. And so these nine days, I think there’s going to be a lot that happens.”

Youngkin’s office did not respond to a question about whether the governor has been in contact with the congressional delegation to urge a resolution.

His tone in Petersburg was softer than a few days earlier on Fox Business, when Youngkin told host Maria Bartiromo that it was up to Biden to resolve the impasse.

“A deal could be hit,” he said in the TV interview. “I think it’s going to require Joe Biden to come to the table and back off the crazy, reckless spending that he has been such a champion of.”

He praised efforts among Republicans earlier this week to come up with a short-term spending proposal, which ultimately fell apart. “I do completely back the Republicans coming together and saying, ‘Hey, folks, let’s do this. Let’s put something on the table,’” Youngkin said in the Fox interview.

But he went on to blame Biden for a host of problems that he said plague the county, including inflation, “reckless spending,” an open border and “communist Chinese spies coming across the border trying to infiltrate every aspect of America.”

“This is a moment for us to force Joe Biden to come to the table,” he said. “He has to lead.”