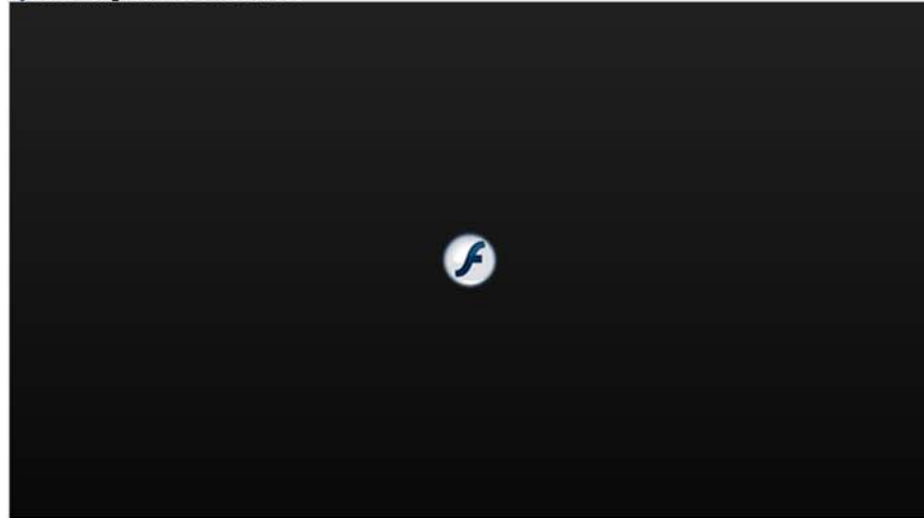




## Will Boehner risk the Tea Party's wrath?

By Scott Wong - 02/24/15 08:52 PM EST



Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) is back in a familiar spot: between a rock and a hard place.

The Senate **appears poised** to send the House a "clean" bill funding the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), free of any measures attacking President Obama's executive actions on immigration. But it's not clear the plan could win the support of even a majority of Boehner's conference.

Bringing legislation to the floor that would only pass with help from Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Democrats could significantly undermine the Speaker's credibility with his 245-member caucus — the largest majority the GOP has had in generations.

House Republicans will huddle in a private meeting in the Capitol basement on Wednesday morning to discuss their options, and it's likely to be a tense gathering.

Centrist Republicans have been urging their colleagues to pass a clean funding bill in order to avert the partial shutdown at Homeland Security that is slated to begin on Saturday.

But immigration hardliners are bashing Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell's (R-Ky.) plan B, which splits DHS funding from GOP provisions gutting Obama's 2014 immigration orders. They're pressuring Boehner and his leadership team to stick with the original House-passed bill that tied funding to GOP immigration riders, even though Senate Democrats have repeatedly blocked it.

"What Majority Leader McConnell has isn't a 'plan' but a 'cop-out,'" said Tristan Daedalus, spokesman for conservative Rep. Matt Salmon (R-Ariz.).

"By divorcing these two pieces of the bill, the majority leader is showing that he is more concerned with acquiescing to the ridiculous demands of the Democratic Caucus than for standing up for the institution of Congress," he added. "The House should not take up a measure that cedes de facto lawmaking authority to the executive without repercussion."

Another conservative, Rep. Mark Meadows (R-N.C.), will not support the McConnell plan because it "allows for the president's unconstitutional executive amnesty to move forward," his spokeswoman said.

More than 20 conservative House members prepared a letter Tuesday warning Boehner not to cave to Democrats in the fight over Obama's immigration actions, which would shield millions of illegal immigrants from deportation.

"Now is the time to stand firm against these unlawful executive actions," the lawmakers wrote in the letter, which is being circulated by Rep. Jeff Duncan (R-S.C.) and will be sent to Boehner, Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.) and Majority Whip Steve Scalise (R-La.).

Among the lawmakers who have signed onto the letter are Salmon and Reps. Steve King of Iowa, Louie Gohmert of Texas, Dave Brat of Virginia and Jim Jordan of Ohio, who is the chairman of the new conservative Freedom Caucus.

While the letter doesn't reference the McConnell plan, it warns GOP leaders that a federal judge's decision to temporarily halt Obama's immigration moves should not be seen as an escape hatch from the funding standoff. The Obama administration is appealing the decision, they noted.

"District Court rulings can be overturned, but the power of the purse is absolute," the conservatives wrote.

Boehner has signaled he's open to the McConnell plan, but isn't showing his cards just yet. He'll take the temperature of his conference Wednesday morning to see what kind of Republican support there is for the new strategy. Still, those close to the Speaker aren't hopeful.

"I think it's problematic for a clean bill to come up in the House," Sen. Richard Burr (R-N.C.), who regularly dines with Boehner, told The Hill on Tuesday.

Last December, more than 160 House Republicans voted for the so-called "cromnibus" appropriations bill, which funded all federal agencies except the DHS through the fiscal year ending Sept. 30. The McConnell plan would likely fall short of that number in a vote, because many Republicans backed the cromnibus with the promise that it would block Obama's immigration policies.

Another option is a House-Senate conference committee. If the Senate passes a clean DHS bill, it could set in motion a bicameral conference committee that would try to iron out the differences between the House- and Senate-passed bills, Rules Committee Chairman Pete Sessions (R-Texas) told reporters as he emerged Tuesday evening from Boehner's office.

But he said Congress would need to pass a short-term stopgap measure known as a continuing resolution to avert a shutdown and give the conference committee enough time to reach an agreement.

"Then we're working the way the system is supposed to work," Sessions said. "We do our work, the Senate does its work, we go to conference, we make things happen, we don't put anyone at risk."

Centrist Republicans have been sounding the alarm about a potential DHS shutdown, saying lawmakers must fund the agency and pay its employees amid numerous terror threats worldwide. And they're publicly warning that the GOP — not Obama — will be blamed if Congress misses its deadline on Friday.

"We should fund our Homeland Security Department," freshman Rep. Ryan Costello (R-Pa.), who opposed the House's initial move to link DHS funding to the immigration riders, said in an interview.

"The unconstitutional acts of the president are just that — it's going to resolve itself through the courts," he said. "But ultimately we need to make sure we're funding a department that needs to be funded."

**TAGS: United States House of Representatives, John Boehner, Mitch McConnell, Republican Party, Immigration**

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