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# House passes bill to defund Obama's immigration orders

By Rebecca Shabad and Cristina Marcos

The House voted Wednesday to block funding for President Obama's immigration orders, firing the first shot in a high-stakes battle over deferred deportations for the millions of people who are in the country illegally.

The measure passed in a 236-191 vote, with 10 Republicans voting against it and two Democrats voting in favor.

Democrats rallied against the bill, which would fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) through September, after Republicans adopted a series of contentious amendments that take aim at facets of Obama's immigration policy.

One of the amendments would choke off funding for Obama's executive action announced in November, which would allow some illegal immigrants to stay in the country and obtain work permits.

A second amendment would halt the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA), which lifts deportation for some illegal immigrants who came to the United States as children.

The defunding amendment was adopted in a 237-190 vote, with seven Republicans voting no, while the DACA amendment was approved 218-209, with 26 Republicans defecting.

House Democrats were unified in opposition to both provisions.

The 10 Republican no votes on the final legislation came from Reps. Justin Amash (Mich.), Mike Coffman (Colo.), Carlos Curbelo (Fla.), Jeff Denham (Calif.), Mario Díaz-Balart (Fla.), Robert Dold (Ill.), Renee Ellmers (N.C.), Thomas Massie (Ky.), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (Fla.) and David Valadao (Calif.).

The two Democrats voting in favor were Reps. Brad Ashford (Neb.) and Collin Peterson (Minn.).

Before the votes began, Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) made a rare speech on the House floor in support and quoted 22 times when Obama said he didn't have the authority to unilaterally rewrite immigration law.

"We are dealing with a president who has ignored the people, ignored the Constitution, and even his own past statements," Boehner said.

Rep. Mick Mulvaney (R-S.C.), one of the co-sponsors of the amendment to defund the November actions, said lawmakers needed to stand up to avoid setting a new precedent where the executive branch is allowed to flout the will of Congress.

"Law is not made because Congress fails to act. Law is made in this room when we do act," Mulvaney said during floor debate.

Mulvaney pledged that he would join Democrats in opposing similar unilateral action from a Republican president.

"I will be the first to be here with you to stand against that to fight back," Mulvaney said.

Three other amendments that were folded into the spending bill would prioritize deportation for illegal immigrants convicted of sexual abuse and domestic violence; promote the hiring of U.S. citizens above those who are in the country illegally, and express the sense of Congress the administration should "stop putting the interest of immigrants who worked within the legal framework to come to the US behind those who came here illegally."

All five amendments were attached to a nearly \$40 billion bill that would fund DHS through September. Congress must fund the department by Feb. 27 or it could shut down.

House Republicans say they are acting well ahead of the deadline to give the Republican Senate enough time to consider the package. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) has said the upper chamber would focus on the bill in February, which could lead to a showdown with Democrats at the eleventh hour.

The White House has already promised that President Obama would veto the DHS bill if "ideological provisions" were tied to it.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) accused Republicans of "picking an unnecessary political fight" and vowed the House bill "will not pass the Senate."

"Tearing families apart does nothing to secure our borders, fix our broken immigration system or strengthen our economy. This is not a game and it is time for Republicans to take their responsibility to govern seriously, instead of

playing to the most extreme voices in their party."

After Wednesday's vote, House Republicans headed out of Washington to attend a joint retreat with Senate Republicans in Hershey, Pa., where the party's next moves on immigration are likely to be a matter of fierce debate.

Rep. Luis Gutiérrez (D-Ill.) noted that House Republican leaders had presented a set of **immigration reform principles** for a potential legislative overhaul at their retreat just one year ago.

"Wow. Time flies when you're playing politics with people's lives," Gutiérrez said. "What are the headlines today? Behold the Republican immigration strategy, mass deportation."

Gutiérrez said the amendments to undo President Obama's actions would ultimately hurt Republicans in the long run.

"The fruits of your action today will only cause anger and outrage and the mobilization of an immigrant community throughout this nation that will be the death knell to the future of your party as an institution," Gutiérrez said.

The base bill's other key provisions include increased funding for Customs and Border Protection, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and the Secret Service.

The bill decreases funding from the last fiscal year for the Transportation Security Administration, the Coast Guard and for the department's research and development activities.

The DHS funding bill also includes \$10.7 billion for Customs and Border Protection, an increase of nearly \$119 million above last year's funding level, and nearly \$6 billion for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, an increase of \$689 million.

Those provisions are intended to boost border surveillance and to finance more detention beds for illegal immigrants, following last summer's border crisis, when officials struggled to handle an enormous influx of unaccompanied minors from Central America.

In response to last year's Secret Service scandal involving numerous security breaches, the bill provides \$1.7 billion in funding to remedy those failures and to prepare and train officers for the 2016 presidential election. That's an increase of \$80.5 million above the level enacted for fiscal 2014.

The bill also provides about \$753 million for cybersecurity operations, which is a \$39 million decrease from the level enacted for 2014.

*This story was updated at 1:26 p.m.*