

# ★ Dems shun Trump invite

Say meeting on shutdown would have been 'stunt'

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WASHINGTON — A group of House Democrats declined an invitation to meet with President Donald Trump on Tuesday, stymieing a plan by the White House to break the shutdown stalemate by winning over centrist Democrats.

On the 25th day of the government shutdown, both sides remained entrenched in their positions — the White House issued a statement opposing legislation introduced by House Democrats to reopen shuttered agencies until Feb. 1 or Feb. 28, while House Democratic leaders continued to assert that they will not support a spending deal that funds Trump's \$5.7 billion request for a southern border wall.

With no signs of the gap between Trump and Democratic leaders narrowing, several groups of lawmakers have started to meet informally, looking to end the longest-running government shutdown.

White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders chastised House Democrats for not accepting the president's offer to meet on Tuesday, saying, "It's time for the Democrats to come to the table and make a deal."

But several Democrats, pointing to Trump's decision to walk out of a bipartisan meeting at the White House last week after House Speaker Nancy Pelosi refused to support his \$5.7 billion demand, expressed concerns about showing up.

"The question everybody can reasonably ask: Is he inviting people to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue to really try to resolve this problem, or to create a photo-op to project a false sense of bipartisanship?" said House Democratic Caucus chairman Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.).

Rep. Katie Hill (D-Calif.), a member of the class of freshman House Democrats, told reporters that after a morning meeting "the general feeling" among the group was "that whoever goes to the White House is kind of setting themselves up to be used as a stunt."



As both sides held to their positions, President Trump had hoped to win over some centrist Democrats. ■ Video: [newsday.com/nation](https://www.newsday.com/nation)

Five House Republicans who emerged from the White House gathering with Trump criticized Democrats for not showing up.

"If you don't show up at the table, how in the world are you ever going to come up with a solution?" said Rep. Rodney Davis (R-Ill.).

On Capitol Hill, Democrats ramped up efforts to pressure Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell into scheduling a vote to reopen the government temporarily while negotiations over border security funding continue. McConnell (R-Ky.) has repeatedly said he will not sched-

ule a vote on any measures not first supported by Trump.

Nearly a dozen freshman House Democrats staged a demonstration, descending on McConnell's office Tuesday afternoon to call on him to schedule a vote, and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.)

in a Senate floor speech described McConnell as the "only one person who can help America break through this gridlock."

"For the past month, Leader McConnell has been content to hide behind the president, essentially giving him a veto over what comes to the floor of the Senate. It has put him in the ridiculous position of refusing to consider legislation to reopen the government that nearly every Senate Republican has voted for," Schumer said.

McConnell, in a Senate floor speech, accused Democrats of engaging "in increasingly acrobatic contortions in order to dodge a serious conversation about the urgent humanitarian and security crisis at our southern border."

Plans for lawmakers to take a recess at the end of the week until Jan. 28 were put on hold Tuesday, with McConnell and Pelosi both announcing Congress would remain in session until a resolution is reached.

## Town to cover for some fed staff

BY CARL MACGOWAN  
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Brookhaven officials offered Tuesday to temporarily fill in for workers furloughed by the federal government shutdown by assigning town public safety officers and harbor-masters to patrol Fire Island and two other locations.

Town Supervisor Edward P. Romaine said in a news release the town workers would be assigned to the William Floyd Estate in Mastic Beach, Wertheim National Wildlife Refuge in Shirley and Fire Island to "help ensure that these historic and environ-

mentally sensitive federal properties are protected as long as the shutdown lasts."

The three sites are closed or partly closed because of the shutdown.

Brookhaven Councilman Dan Panico said the role of town staff at the federal lands would be "very limited."

"We just wanted to offer these entities our cooperation and assistance. Quite honestly, no one knows how long this is going to drag on," said Panico, a Republican.

A message posted on the National Park Service website says Fire Island National Seashore is open during the

shutdown, but some facilities, such as the Fire Island Lighthouse, are closed to the public. A voicemail message at the seashore's Patchogue office said staff were not available.

Wertheim and other wildlife refuges are closed, according to a message posted by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Federal parks, Panico said, are a major part of Long Island's tourism economy. He expressed sympathy for federal workers affected by the shutdown. "They have to pay their bills. Their mortgage companies want to be paid," he said. "It's a very, very sad situation what's going on right now."