

Tea Party Plays Nice With Funding

BY ERICA WERNER
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The tea party may have learned its lesson. As Congress finishes work on a must-pass spending bill set for votes next week, the most conservative lawmakers on Capitol Hill are eager to send a message on immigration, and stand firm against a government lending bank.

But a year after they forced a 16-day partial government shutdown over President Barack Obama's health care law, few seem to have the stomach to push their demands that far again.

"No question we learned that with the aid of the news media the Democrats were able to pin the blame on us" for last year's shutdown, said conservative Rep. Mo Brooks, R-Ala.

This time around, Brooks said, "We need to pass whatever funding necessary to prevent a government shutdown, first and foremost."

Rep. John Fleming, R-La., another tea party-aligned lawmaker, said: "I don't think any of us want to have a big battle" over the spending bill to fund government operations into December.

Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy announced Wednesday that votes on the measure would be put off to next week to give lawmakers time to weigh the Obama administration's request to include authorization to aid Syrian rebels fighting Islamic State terrorists.

Meanwhile some conservative lawmakers said they are leaning toward supporting the legislation crafted by GOP leaders, even though outside groups on the right are pushing for a "no" vote because it includes an extension of the Export-Import Bank. Many conservatives say the bank that lends to U.S. exporters amounts to corporate welfare.

At the same time, conservatives are signaling they won't use the bill to make a stand over immigration.

Conservatives led by Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, held a press conference this week demanding that Senate Democrats allow a vote on a House-passed measure to block Obama from using executive action to set immigration policy. But Cruz, who played a lead role in last year's shut down, stopped short of threatening to oppose the spending bill if it doesn't include such a measure. And he disclosed no plans to push House members to stand firm against the legislation if it doesn't deal with immigration, like he goaded them to do last year over health care.

The new dynamic represents a change from the final days before Congress' August recess, when conservatives coached by Cruz and Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala., forced House GOP leaders to scuttle legislation to deal with the unaccompanied minors at the border, and replace it with tougher measures.

This time, "They'll make their own decision about that over there," Sessions said. "No one wants to be in a shutdown mode."

Even those conservatives who plan to oppose the spending bill for one reason or another appear to be doing so in full confidence that it will pass anyway, with some Democratic support.

"When I looked at the bill I figured that the leadership's already worked this out with the Democrats," said Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., who was among the lawmakers in a meeting Tuesday night with Cruz. Massie and others want the bill to fund the government past the new year, to take the next round of fiscal negotiations out of a lame duck session. Rep. Matt Salmon, R-Ariz., also plans to vote "no" but said: "I do anticipate it will pass. ... I don't want to see a government shutdown, at all."

Last year's shutdown amounted to a political fiasco for the GOP, disgusting voters and damaging the party's brand without doing anything to rein in Obamacare. One outcome was to strengthen the hand of party leaders, according to GOP aides, while also undercutting the credibility with House Republicans of the senators and outside groups who'd pushed for the shutdown, such as Heritage Action and the Club for Growth.

At the same time, the little-known Export-Import Bank does not carry the political and emotional charge of Obamacare, while the immigration issue is not an immediate concern for most lawmakers since Obama announced he was postponing taking action until after the election.

Official: Rice Video Sent To NFL In April

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) — A law enforcement official says he sent a video of Ray Rice punching his then-fiancee to an NFL executive five months ago, while Commissioner Roger Goddell has insisted the league didn't see the violent images until this week.

The person played The Associated Press a 12-second voicemail from an NFL office number on April 9 confirming the video arrived. A female voice expresses thanks and says: "You're right. It's terrible."

The law enforcement official, speaking to the AP on condition of anonymity because of the ongoing investigation, says he had no further communication with any NFL employee and can't confirm anyone watched the video. The person said he was unauthorized to release the video but shared it unsolicited, because he wanted the NFL to have it before deciding on Rice's punishment.

The NFL has repeatedly said it asked for but could not obtain the video of the Baltimore Ravens running back hitting Janay Palmer — who is now his wife — at an Atlantic City casino in February.

Cameron Implores Scots Not To Leave UK

GLASGOW, Scotland (AP) — The British political establishment descended on Scotland on Wednesday to plead for a united United Kingdom, after polls suggested the once-fanciful notion of Scots voting to break from Britain has become a real possibility in next week's referendum.

The leaders of the three main London-based parties wooed skeptical Scottish voters with the fervor of a rejected lover. But some Scots seemed unmoved, and increasingly confident independence leader Alex Salmond accused his opponents of succumbing to panic.

In a rare display of cross-party unity, Prime Minister David Cameron, Labour leader Ed Miliband and Liberal Democrat chief Nick Clegg all pulled out of a weekly House of Commons question session to make a campaign dash to Scotland, as polls indicated the two sides are neck-and-neck ahead of the Sept. 18 referendum.

ISIS

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involve American combat troops fighting on foreign soil," he added.

The president's announcements follow a summer of deliberation at the White House over how to respond to the violent Islamic State militants. While administration officials have said they are not aware of a credible threat of a potential attack by the militants in the U.S., they say the group poses risks to Americans and interests across the Middle East. Officials are also concerned about the prospect that Westerners, including Americans, who have joined the militant group could return to their home countries to launch attacks.

In recent weeks, the militants have released videos depicting the beheading of

two American journalists in Syria. The violent images appear to have had an impact on a formerly war-weary public, with multiple polls in recent days showing that the majority of Americans support airstrikes in both Iraq and Syria.

The U.S. began launching limited airstrikes against Islamic State targets in Iraq earlier this summer at the request of that country's former prime minister. But Obama vowed that he would not commit the U.S. to a deeper military campaign until Iraq formed a new government that allowed greater participation from all sects, a step Iraqi leaders took Tuesday.

Officials said Obama plans to proceed with both the broader airstrikes in Iraq and the strikes in Syria without seeking new authorization from Congress. Instead, he is to act under a use-of-force authorization Congress passed in the days after 9/11

to give President George W. Bush the ability to go after those who perpetrated the terror attacks. Obama has previously called for that authorization to be repealed, but he has also used it as support for strikes against terror targets in Yemen and Somalia.

Obama compared the new U.S. mission in Iraq and Syria to the actions in Yemen and Somalia, campaigns that have gone on for years.

"This counterterrorism campaign will be waged through a steady, relentless effort to take out ISIL wherever they exist, using our air power and our support for partner forces on the ground," he said.

Obama is seeking authorization from Congress for a Pentagon-led effort to train and arm more moderate elements of the Syrian opposition. Even before his remarks, congressional leaders were grappling with whether to support that request and if

so, how to get such a measure through the fractured legislature before the November elections.

The White House wants Congress to include the authorization in a temporary funding measure lawmakers are expected to vote on before adjourning later this month. Republicans have made no commitment to support the request and the House GOP has so far not included the measure in the funding legislation.

A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said the Nevada Democrat might opt to seek separate legislation.

While the CIA currently runs a small program to arm the rebels, the new version would be more robust. Obama asked Congress earlier this year to approve a \$500 million program to expand the effort and put it under Pentagon control, but the request stalled on Capitol Hill.

Some of Obama's own advisers, including former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, pressed him to arm the rebels early in their fight against Assad. But Obama resisted, arguing that there was too much uncertainty about the composition of the rebel forces. He also expressed concern about adding more firepower to an already bloody civil war.

The White House announced Wednesday that it was also providing \$25 million in immediate military assistance to the Iraqi government as part of efforts to combat the Islamic State.

The Treasury Department will also step up efforts to undermine the Islamic State group's finances. David Cohen, Treasury's undersecretary for terrorism and financial intelligence, wrote in a blog post that the U.S. would be working with other countries, especially Gulf states, to cut off the group's

external funding networks and its access to the global financial system.

The U.S. has been pressing allies in Europe, the Middle East and elsewhere to help with efforts to degrade the terror group.

France's foreign minister said Wednesday that his country was ready to take part in airstrikes against extremist fighters in Iraq if needed. And the German government announced that it was sending assault rifles, ammunition, anti-tank weapons and armored vehicles to Kurdish forces in Iraq fighting, breaking with Berlin's previous reluctance to send weapons into conflicts.

Secretary of State John Kerry is traveling to Saudi Arabia and Jordan this week. He first made a stop in Baghdad to meet with Iraq's new leaders and pledge U.S. support for eliminating the extremist group.

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