

Exclusive

## **White House to agencies: Prepare mass firing plans for a potential shutdown**

In memo, the Trump administration says the Reduction-in-Force plans would go beyond standard shutdown furloughs.

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The White House budget office is instructing federal agencies to prepare reduction-in-force plans for mass firings during a possible government shutdown, specifically targeting employees who work for programs that are not legally required to continue.

The Office of Management and Budget move to permanently reduce the government workforce if there is a shutdown, outlined in a memo shared with POLITICO ahead of release to agencies tonight, escalates the stakes of a potential shutdown next week.

In the memo, OMB told agencies to identify programs, projects and activities where discretionary funding will lapse on Oct. 1 and no alternative funding source is available. For those areas, OMB directed agencies to begin drafting RIF plans that would go beyond standard furloughs, permanently eliminating jobs in programs not consistent with President Donald Trump's priorities in the event of a shutdown.

The move marks a significant break from how shutdowns have been handled in recent decades, when most furloughs were temporary and employees were brought back once Congress voted to reopen government and funding was restored. This time, OMB Director Russ Vought is using the threat of permanent job cuts as leverage, upping the ante in the standoff with Democrats in Congress over government spending.

"Programs that did not benefit from an infusion of mandatory appropriations will bear the brunt of a shutdown," OMB wrote in the memo. Agencies were told to submit their proposed RIF plans to OMB and to issue notices to employees even if they would otherwise be excepted or furloughed during a lapse in funding.

Programs that will continue regardless of a shutdown include Social Security, Medicare, veterans benefits, military operations, law enforcement, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection and air traffic control, according to an OMB official granted anonymity to share information not yet public.

The guidance comes as Republicans and Democrats on Capitol Hill are locked in an impasse over funding, with just days before the fiscal year ends Sept. 30. The House passed a stopgap spending measure to float federal operations through Nov. 21, but Democrats in the Senate have refused to advance it, demanding that Republicans come

to the table to negotiate a bipartisan package that could include an extension of expiring Affordable Care Act subsidies.

The OMB letter notes that if Congress successfully passes a clean stopgap bill prior to Sept. 30, the additional steps outlined in this email will not be necessary.

The memo appears to vindicate warnings issued by some Democrats — most prominently Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer — during the last shutdown standoff in March. Schumer at the time moved to allow a GOP-written spending bill to pass, arguing that a shutdown would be a “gift” allowing Trump and his deputies “to destroy vital government services at a significantly faster rate than they can right now.”

Schumer says he has since revised that view, saying this month that the administration’s attacks on federal agencies “will get worse with or without [a shutdown], because Trump is lawless.”

He made a similar point Wednesday after POLITICO published details of the memo, calling it an “attempt at intimidation.”

“This is nothing new and has nothing to do with funding the government,” he said. “These unnecessary firings will either be overturned in court or the administration will end up hiring the workers back, just like they did as recently as today.”

But House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries struck a different note in an X post that appeared to take the threat seriously. He addressed it to voters in federal-worker-rich Virginia, who will soon elect a governor and other state officials.

“Their goal is to ruin your life and punish hardworking families already struggling with Trump Tariffs and inflation,” he said. “Remember in November.”