

Trump's offer of temporary protection for immigrants to end shutdown is a 'non-starter,' say Democrats

By Stephen Collinson and Maegan Vazquez

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Washington (CNN) — President Donald Trump on Saturday launched a new plan to end the government shutdown, offering temporary protection from deportations for some undocumented immigrants in exchange for \$5.7 billion in wall funding.

But Democrats swiftly rejected the proposal, which also includes millions of dollars for humanitarian aid and drug detection technology, and called on Trump to open the government before negotiations on immigration could start.

The President delivered a short speech from the White House in an attempt to shift the political dynamics of the longest government shutdown in history after [polls showed that he was getting most of the blame](#). He had previously said he would be "proud" to close down the government in the wall fight.

He offered a three-year reprieve from deportation to undocumented migrants brought to the US as children who are covered by the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program and to people from certain nations who qualify for Temporary Protected Status.

"This is a common-sense compromise both parties should embrace," Trump said, apparently seeking to portray himself as a deal maker taking the initiative to end a record-long shutdown now in its 29th day that has left 800,000 federal workers without a paycheck.

He also appeared to offer a concession on the characteristics of his border wall -- one of his most iconic political goals. He described the wall as a "strategic deployment of physical barriers or a wall. This is not a 2000-mile concrete structure from sea to shining sea. These are steel barriers in high priority locations."

But the President also sprinkled his speech with his hardline immigration rhetoric and made questionable claims about how the wall would transform the fight against drugs trafficking and violent crime in America. Such language is unlikely to entice Democrats into the compromise Trump said he was seeking.

"The radical left can never control our borders. I will never let it happen," Trump said.

The President notably did not mention the plight of federal workers going without paychecks, some of whom fear they may not be able to make mortgage, rent or car payments, or are relying on food banks.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi did not even wait for the speech to reject the proposal. She said it was a "a compilation of several previously rejected initiatives, each of which is unacceptable and in total, do not represent a good faith effort to restore certainty to people's lives."

"It is unlikely that any one of these provisions alone would pass the House, and taken together, they are a non-starter. For one thing, this proposal does not include the permanent solution for the Dreamers and TPS recipients that our country needs and supports," Pelosi said in a statement.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said that the President's offer was not really an offer at all.

"It was the President who singled-handedly took away DACA and TPS protections in the first place -- offering some protections back in exchange for the wall is not a compromise but more hostage taking," Schumer said in a statement.

Though it was quickly rejected by Democrats, Trump's proposal could move the politics of the shutdown to a new stage, as various bills to reopen the government and fund the wall are debated on Capitol Hill, after weeks of fruitless negotiations between Democrats and the President.

His plan however appeared to be as much an effort to ease his own political predicament on the shutdown as a true attempt to tempt Democrats into a deal as it did not seriously address their demands and he did not consult them before making his announcement.

House Democrats have passed a number of bills that would reopen the government or individual agencies, but they have gone nowhere in the Senate.

Senate Republican Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, who has been on the sidelines since before Christmas, signaled an effort to raise pressure on Democrats by promising to put Trump's proposal on the Senate floor next week. Previously, McConnell said he would only move on bills that had the support of the President and Democrats.

The proposal McConnell will put on the floor this week is more than just what the president laid out today -- including some pieces designed to put Democrats in a more difficult position.

According to a source with direct knowledge, some of what will be in the final package includes:

- All seven outstanding appropriations bills, as agreed upon in the House-Senate conference process -- this includes the Department of Homeland Security measure that has been at the center of the entire shutdown.

- Asylum law changes -- one that would create in-country asylum processing for Central America minors, and another that would give the administration the power to immediately deport any minor who crossed the border without going through the in-country process.
- Extension of the Violence Against Women Act through the end of September.
- Extension of the EB-5 visa program, E-Verify program that allows employers to confirm employee work eligibility, the Conrad 30 program for international medical school graduates, Special Immigrant Religious Workers program, and H2B returning worker authority for DHS, all through the end of the fiscal year.

"I commend the President for his leadership in proposing this bold solution to reopen the government, secure the border, and take bipartisan steps toward addressing current immigration issues," McConnell said in a statement.

"Compromise in divided government means that everyone can't get everything they want every time. The President's proposal reflects that. It strikes a fair compromise by incorporating priorities from both sides of the aisle.

Utah Sen. Mitt Romney, who has emerged as a frequent Trump critic after only a few weeks in the chamber also backed the plan.

"@POTUS has put forth a reasonable, good faith proposal that will reopen the government and help secure the border. I look forward to voting for it and will work to encourage my Republican and Democratic colleagues to do the same," Romney wrote on Twitter.

But there was immediate pushback from the far right -- in a reminder of the criticism by conservative pundits that caused Trump to pull out of a deal to keep the government open late last year.

"Trump proposes amnesty. We voted for Trump and got Jeb!" said Ann Coulter on Twitter, referring to former Florida governor and GOP presidential candidate Jeb Bush.

"100 miles of border wall in exchange for amnestying millions of illegals. So if we grant citizenship to a BILLION foreigners, maybe we can finally get a full border wall," Coulter wrote in another tweet.

Trump's proposal includes \$800 million for urgent humanitarian assistance and \$805 million for drug detection technology to secure ports of entry, as well additional border agents, law enforcement officials and new immigration judge teams to deal with cases of migrants crossing the US-Mexico border.

Though Trump did bring up the issue of DACA recipients, the President's refusal to offer a permanent path to citizenship is a deal breaker for Democrats.

Last year, Democratic senators worked on a deal with Republicans which offered \$25 billion in border funding in exchange for a permanent path to citizenship for some 1.8 million Dreamers. Trump walked away from the offer.

In 2017, Trump's administration announced plans to phase out the DACA program, and Trump has previously said he would wait to address protections for its recipients after a Supreme Court ruling on the matter.

The makings of the proposal

A source familiar with the discussions said the President tasked his son-in-law and White House adviser Jared Kushner, acting chief of staff Mick Mulvaney and Vice President Mike Pence with working to craft a broader compromise proposal that they could present to Democrats.

The three men set out to put together a "fair and reasonable proposal," engaging with numerous members of Congress in recent weeks, before discussing the effort with Trump in recent days.

The White House wanted it to look like they had a valid reason for canceling House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's trip to Afghanistan, and feared that if there was no movement this weekend -- no meetings, no negotiations or no speeches -- it would look bad, two people familiar with the schedule told CNN.

Trump's proposal came together over the last week, with White House officials working into Friday night to hammer out the details and how Trump would lay it out in his Saturday afternoon address.

Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina had floated such a compromise to the President as early as late December.

Another source told CNN the plan is modeled after proposals Democrats have supported and voted for in the past in an added effort to pressure them back to the negotiating table.

Though he didn't come up with or help craft the proposal, McConnell offered suggestions over the last two days as to how to move the plan forward, a source familiar told CNN. House Republican leaders are also supportive of the move.

As part of a package of six spending bills, House Democrats next week will vote on \$1 billion for additional border security measures, according to a Democratic source.

CNN's Abby Phillip, Kaitlan Collins, Jeremy Diamond, Manu Raju, Phil Mattingly, Ashley Killough, Veronica Stracqualursi, Ryan Nobles, Sophie Tatum and Liz Stark contributed to this report.