



Trump's deals with the Democrats

Emma Kilheeny analyses two deals made by President Trump and the Congressional Democrats in one week

On 6 September 2017 President Trump agreed a deal with Democrat Congressional leaders Charles (Chuck) Schumer (senate minority leader) and Nancy Pelosi (house minority leader) on a 3-month plan to fund the government and raise the debt ceiling level. On 13 September Trump also agreed with Democrat leaders the outline of a deal on immigration and border controls.

Debt-ceiling deal

In a meeting with Schumer and Pelosi, Trump agreed to their request for a 'sacred' 3-month extension to raise the borrowing limit until 15 December. After this, Congress will vote on the issue.

Republican reaction

This will lead to further tension between Trump and the Republican Congressional leaders. Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell and house speaker Paul Ryan had been leading sensitive negotiations over the debt-ceiling level. They wanted an 18-month debt limit in order to remove the debt ceiling as an electoral issue leading up to the 2018 mid-term elections and to exclude the Democrats from major policy debates.

When asked by reporters about the deal, McConnell said, 'the president can speak for himself, but his feeling was that we needed to come together to not create a picture of divisiveness at a time of genuine national crisis.' Paul Ryan had earlier described the Democrats' plans for a 3-month debt limit as 'ridiculous and disgraceful'.

Trump overruled his own treasury secretary on the issue and other senior Republicans were frustrated

with the deal. Mark Meadows, chair of the conservative House Freedom Caucus, warned that Trump's failure to secure a longer-term debt-limit could threaten Republican plans to cut spending. The more moderate Republican senator Susan Collins said, 'To have to go through this painful exercise in December would not be my first choice.'

Why did Trump do it?

Trump wanted to avoid government shutdown. He told reporters that the debt ceiling would automatically be agreed on because of its importance. After months of debates about whether to enact the flagship policy of building a wall along the border with Mexico, and after narrowly failing to repeal the Affordable Care Act, he has realised that if he wants to achieve anything he will need to work with the Democrats on some issues.

After the agreement was reached, Mitch McConnell announced that he would extend government funding and the debt limit in addition to providing \$15.25 billion to deal with the aftermath of hurricanes Harvey and Irma. The deal with the Democrats allowed Trump to secure this disaster-relief funding.

Immigration deal

During the meeting with Schumer and Pelosi, Trump also agreed to support the Obama policy aimed at allowing 690,000 young undocumented immigrants to avoid deportation. In June 2012 Obama issued an executive order stating that the USA would stop deporting individuals who met certain criteria under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

Trump had begun to phase out DACA after pressure from hard-line Republicans who viewed the policy as an amnesty for illegal immigrants. However, on 14 September the president announced that he was fairly close to a deal with the Democrats for DACA, and that the speaker Paul Ryan and Mitch McConnell were 'very much on board' with this. Congress has been given 6 months to come up with a plan to protect DACA recipients.

In return, the Democrats will help Trump make 'massive' improvements in security along the border with Mexico. Trump announced that the wall would come later. He also asked Democrats to consider supporting the Raise Act, a bill put forward by Republican senators Tom Cotton and David Perdue, which would place tougher restrictions on legal immigration, halving it over the next decade.

Reaction to the DACA deal

A number of political allies, including congressman Steve King, are 'disillusioned beyond repair' after Trump's deal with the Democrats over DACA. Last year Trump described DACA as 'an illegal executive amnesty' and the deal is seen as a U-turn. A number of Republican members of Congress have announced their retirement in the past week, seemingly fed up with President Trump. The electorate may be more forgiving. Seventy-two per cent of Republican voters think it is good for the country if Trump works with the Democrats.

Activities

- 1 Imagine you are President Trump. Create a list of arguments for and against making a deal with the Democrats over the debt ceiling and DACA.
- 2 To what extent does Trump engaging in bipartisan deals with the Democrats help or hinder the US system of government? Discuss.

Weblinks to follow up

The BBC has a number of short videos relating to President Trump and DACA:

<http://tinyurl.com/y9u69w5k>

Find out more about the debt ceiling:

<http://tinyurl.com/ychlbl8l>

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