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Trump’s new tactic for bypassing Congress

By ARIANNA SKIBELL | 06/10/2025 06:14 PM EDT

President Donald Trump’s budget chief is trying out an audacious strategy to eliminate congressionally approved funding without lawmakers’ sign-off.

Russ Vought, who leads the Office of Management and Budget, has directed a dozen federal agencies to freeze upward of \$30 billion in spending on a broad array of programs, including ones at NASA and the Environmental Protection Agency, write Scott Waldman and Corbin Hiar.

The plan is to delay that funding until the final weeks of the fiscal year, which runs until Sept. 30. Then, the White House will ask Congress to permanently eliminate the funding through a so-called rescission request.

Even if Congress rejects the request — or, more likely, doesn’t vote on it at all — the White House could try to withhold the funds until the fiscal year clock resets on Oct. 1 and the cuts become permanent.

If the so-called pocket rescission works, it could pave the way for the administration to retroactively cancel congressional funding.

“I think it upends a fundamental check and balance contemplated in our Constitution, and I don’t understand how you subordinate Congress’ power of the purse,” Joseph Carlile, former associate director at OMB in the Biden administration, told Scott and Corbin.

Vought is calling the funding freeze a deferral — which first requires congressional sign-off. But instead, he has told agencies to withhold the funds before he sends the deferral package to Congress.

Some agency officials were “shocked” at the move, an administration source with direct knowledge of the plan told Scott and Corbin.

In a Friday email to top officials, the National Science Foundation’s budget director wrote that the spending freeze targets the agency’s research and education programs.

“I imagine you will all have questions, as do we,” Caitlyn Fife wrote. “However we are immediately focused on pulling the funds back to ensure there are no further commitments or obligations.”

Also on the list are tens of millions of dollars for national park operations as well as more than \$100 million in science spending at NASA, which includes climate research.

The strategy is expected to draw legal pushback. That could land the administration’s effort before the Supreme Court, which Vought would welcome.

He has long argued that impounding some congressionally appropriated funding is constitutional, and he has said he wants the Supreme Court to validate what would be a significant weakening of congressional oversight of the federal budget.

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HOT OFF THE PRESS

Dispatches from POLITICO's 2025 Energy Summit today in Washington:

GOP megabill could undermine US energy production, Republicans warn

Five takeaways from the Trump administration officials, lawmakers, former policymakers and business leaders who spoke today.

Trump energy adviser slams renewables, says focus is on fossil fuels

Some other Republicans might favor investing in solar and wind energy, but “the president is in charge,” the executive director of the National Energy Dominance Council said.

Energy powerhouse to Republicans: Don't ‘take renewables off the table’

The head of NextEra Energy warns that building new natural gas generation and nuclear power will take too long — and wind and solar power are quicker to add now.

Heinrich: ‘Republicans are going to own increased energy prices’

GOP candidates will pay an “enormous political price” for their cuts to renewable energy projects, the New Mexico Democrat predicted.

POWER CENTERS

EPA to propose rolling back power plant rule

EPA will move Wednesday to repeal federal limits on power plant climate pollution, write Jean Chemnick and Zack Colman.

EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin will announce the proposal to roll back the Biden-era rule at an event at agency headquarters, according to six people familiar with the situation. He will also propose repealing a separate regulation to curb hazardous air pollution such as mercury.

Scrapping the power plant rule would effectively shelve regulations for the electricity sector, which accounts for one-quarter of U.S. greenhouse gases.

California vehicle emission rules on chopping block

Trump plans to sign a trio of resolutions Thursday to revoke California's national-leading vehicle emissions standards, writes Alex Nieves.

Trump's signature will finalize his administration's monthslong effort to thwart California's authority to set stricter electrification rules for passenger vehicles and commercial trucks, along with higher standards for heavy-duty diesel engines.

Democrats scramble to save green credits

Senate Democrats are ramping up pressure on Republicans to try to protect swaths of their 2022 climate law as the GOP races to advance their party-line megabill, writes Kelsey Brugger.

The situation has Democrats trying to influence legislation they have no intention of supporting. Whether they succeed is another question altogether.

Utilities await DOE action on loans

A growing chorus of consumer advocates and environmentalists is urging Trump's Energy Department to lock in billions of dollars in loan guarantees for utilities, arguing that the loans will help cut utility bills for everyday Americans as prices spike nationwide, write Brian Dabbs and Jason Plautz.

The \$23 billion in Biden-era loans — much of which would go to Midwest states that voted for Trump — could trigger big investments in new long-range power lines, batteries, clean energy and natural gas infrastructure.

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Trump has taken a “scorched earth” approach to climate policy by going far beyond his first-term actions, a former diplomat said Tuesday during the POLITICO Energy Summit.

Utah Republican Sen. John Curtis raised doubts Tuesday the GOP could pass its megabill by its self-imposed Independence Day deadline.

House Energy and Commerce Chair Brett Guthrie suggested Tuesday that he is looking ahead of the fight over Republicans' mega reconciliation bill toward bipartisan legislation tackling issues like artificial intelligence.

That's it for today, folks! Thanks for reading.

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