

America

'Undermines Biden's agenda'

McConnell seizes on debt 'standoff'

WASHINGTON, Oct 9, (AP): In the frantic bid to avert a default on the nation's debt, Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell held a position of unusual power - as the one who orchestrated both the problem and the solution.

McConnell is no longer the majority leader, but he is exerting his minority status in convoluted and uncharted ways, all in an effort to stop President Joe Biden's domestic agenda and even if doing so pushes the country toward grave economic uncertainty.

All said, the outcome of this debt crisis leaves zero confidence there won't be a next one. In fact, McConnell engineered an end to the standoff that ensures Congress will be in the same spot in December when funding to pay America's bills next runs out. That means another potentially devastating debt showdown, all as the COVID-19 crisis lingers and the economy struggles to recover.

"Mitch McConnell loves chaos," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio, chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs Committee. "He's a very smart tactician and strategist, but the country pays the price so often for what he does."

Crisis

The crisis has cemented McConnell's legacy as a master of misdirection. He's the architect of the impasse and the one who resolved it, if only for the short term. More battles are to come as Democrats narrow Biden's big agenda, a now-\$2 trillion expansion of health, child care and climate change programs, all paid for with taxes on corporations and the wealthy that Republicans oppose.

To some Republicans, McConnell is a shrewd leader, using every tool at his disposal to leverage power and undermine Biden's priorities. To others, including Donald Trump, he is weak, having "caved" too soon.

To Democrats, McConnell remains an infuriating rival who has shown again he is willing to break one institutional norm after another to pursue Republican power.

"McConnell's role is to be the leader of the opposition and it's his job to push back on what the majority wants to do," said Alex Conant, a Republican strategist.

"Nobody should be surprised to see the leader of the Republicans making the Democrats' job harder," he said.

Risks

The risks are clear, not just for Biden and the Democrats who control Washington.

The debt showdown left Democrats portrayed as big spenders, willing to boost the nation's now-\$28.4 trillion debt to pay the bills. But both parties have contributed to that load because of past decisions that leave the government rarely operating in the black. Republicans, too, risk recriminations from all sides of their deeply divided party. In easing off the crisis, McConnell insulated his Republicans from further blame, but infuriated Trump and his allies, who are eager to skewer the Kentucky senator for giving in.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, said he told his colleagues during a private meeting before the debt vote that it was "a mistake for Republican leadership to agree to this deal."

Once a routine vote to ensure the nation's bills are paid, raising the debt limit has become a political weapon, particularly for Republicans, to rail against government spending. The tea party class of Republicans a decade ago brought the nation to the brink of default over the issue and set a new GOP strategy.

In this case, McConnell made it clear he had no demands other than to disrupt Biden's domestic agenda, the now-\$2 trillion package that is the president's signature legislation but is derided by Republicans as a "socialist tax-and-spending spree."

In muscling Biden's agenda to passage, Democrats are relying on a complicated procedure, the budget reconciliation process, which allows 51 votes for approval, rather than the 60 typically needed to overcome Senate objections.



McConnell



In this Oct 6, 2021, photo, the light in the cupola of the Capitol Dome is illuminated, indicating that work continues in Congress, in Washington. The dangerous standoff in Congress over raising the debt limit as well as its ultimate resolution both were engineered by Sen. Mitch McConnell, the Republican leader determined to stop President Joe Biden's agenda. (AP)

Showdown with ex-President Trump

Biden will not block documents

WASHINGTON, Oct 9, (AP): The White House says that President Joe Biden will not block the handover of documents sought by a House committee investigating the Jan. 6 insurrection at the US Capitol, setting up a showdown with former President Donald Trump, who wants to shield those White House records from investigators.

The Friday letter from White House counsel Dana Remus to the Archivist of the United States comes at the start of a potentially lengthy legal battle over the investigation. Trump, who told his supporters to "fight like hell" the morning of the insurrection and has defended the rioters who beat police and broke into the Capitol, is trying to block Congress from learning more. Biden has so far sided with House Democrats, who have asked for thousands of pages of documents and subpoenaed witnesses connected to Trump.

The House committee investigating the insurrection, which formed over the summer, now has the momentous task of sorting through the details and obtaining documents and testimony from witnesses who may or may not be cooperative. And the jockeying between the two administrations, Congress and the witnesses is certain to delay the investigation and set the stage for messy litigation that could stretch well into 2022.

In a separate development, a lawyer for Steve Bannon said the former White House aide won't comply with the House committee's investigation because Trump is asserting executive privilege. Bannon is the only one of the top Trump aides subpoenaed on Sept.

23 who was not working for the Trump administration on Jan. 6.

Two other aides, former White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows and former Pentagon aide Kash Patel, are "engaging" with the committee, lawmakers said in a statement.

Remus wrote that Biden has determined that invoking executive privilege "is not in the best interests of the United States." The House panel had asked for the records, including communication within the White House under Trump and information about planning and funding for rallies held in Washington. Among those events was a rally near the White House the morning of Jan. 6 featuring remarks by Trump, who egged on a crowd of thousands protesting Biden's win.

Documents

Remus wrote that the documents "shed light on events within the White House on and about January 6 and bear on the Select Committee's need to understand the facts underlying the most serious attack on the operations of the Federal Government since the Civil War."

The Associated Press obtained a copy of the letter Friday. It was first reported by NBC News. Trump responded with his own letter to the National Archives formally asserting privilege over nearly 50 documents.

Referring to the Presidential Records Act, Trump wrote, "I hereby make a protective assertion of constitutionally based privilege with respect to all additional records." He said if the committee seeks other information he considers privileged information, "I will take

all necessary and appropriate steps to defend the Office of the Presidency."

The investigation sets up a unique clash, pitting the current administration against its predecessor. Since Biden now holds the office of the presidency, he will make the call on some of Trump's privilege claims. And while Biden has accommodated the first requests from Congress, the White House has said it will review new claims on a "case by case basis."

The final word may not rest with Biden, but the courts, if Trump decides to litigate - which is expected - or if the House votes to hold any of the witnesses in contempt of Congress. In the case of a House contempt vote, the Justice Department would then decide whether to prosecute.

If Trump were to win a case to block the documents, that would mark a dramatic expansion of the unwritten executive power. But he is expected to have an uphill battle, as courts have traditionally left questions of executive privilege up to the current White House occupant.

The leaders of the Jan. 6 panel, Democratic Rep. Bennie Thompson of Mississippi and Republican Rep. Liz Cheney of Wyoming, said in a statement Friday that "we will not allow any witness to defy a lawful subpoena or attempt to run out the clock, and we will swiftly consider advancing a criminal contempt of Congress referral."

The committee's subpoenas had set a Thursday deadline for Bannon, Meadows, Patel and a fourth witness, former White House communications aide Dan Scavino, to provide documents.

Britain

'Walk me home' tracker: A top British government official is backing a phone company's proposal for a new tracking service to help protect women walking alone, an idea pitched amid ongoing outrage over the slayings of two young women who were targeted near their homes in London.

The chief executive of Britain's biggest phone company, BT, proposed the "walk me home" service in a letter to Home Secretary Priti Patel. Once a woman activated an app on her phone, the service would track her journey and send an alert to her emergency contacts if she didn't reach her destination on time. Philip Jansen said in the letter. The U.K. Home Office confirmed Patel had received the letter and would respond in "due course." Patel was more supportive in comments to the Daily Mail. (AP)

New vaccine shots: Britain announced Friday that it will offer new vaccinations to thousands of people who volunteered for trials of the Novavax coronavirus vaccine, which hasn't yet been approved for use in any country.

Around 15,000 people in the UK got Novavax shots as part of a clinical trial. While the UK recognizes them as vaccinated, most countries don't, meaning they can't travel.

Britain's health department said more than 15,000 participants will be given two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. The government says it plans to expand the offer to about 6,000 UK participants in trials of other vaccines that also haven't been approved for use. (AP)

Travel restrictions eased: The British government said Thursday that it is to relax travel rules further next week, a move that will open up many long-distance holiday destinations to travelers for the first time since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic a year and half ago.

As well as dramatically whittling down the number of places from which travelers will be required to quarantine in a hotel, the government said it would recognize the vaccination programs of dozens more countries.

In its most dramatic move, it said it will be lifting the hotel quarantine requirement for arrivals to England from 47 countries, including South Africa, Mexico and Thailand. (AP)

Probe at church-run homes: Police in Northern Ireland on Wednesday announced an investigation into allegations of physical and sexual abuse at church-run institutions that housed unmarried women and their children.

The announcement came a day after an independent panel recommended a public inquiry to examine human rights abuses in the homes, so-called Magdalene laundries and workhouses. Detective Chief Superintendent Anthony McNally said the force has set up dedicated reporting channels to make it easier for people to come forward. (AP)

LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading retailer in the region and regarded as among the most powerful retailers in the world, launched the 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion at all its outlets in Kuwait from 6 October.

The week-long festival, which runs to 12 October, was inaugurated by South African Ambassador to Kuwait H.E. Manelisi GENGE, at the Al-Qurain outlet of the hypermarket in the presence of top management officials.

The 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion that highlights and celebrates the extensive range and multiplicity of high-quality food products from the 'Rainbow Nation', provides shoppers with the opportunity to purchase some of the finest and most popular South African food items at very special prices.

Among the competitively priced products being offered at during the promotion period are more than three dozen popular South African brands, including:



All Gold, All Joy, B Well, Bakers, Blue Diamond, Bokomo, Buttanutt, Cake Delights, Cape Cookies, Cape Foods, CapeHerb&Spice, Carara, Eezy Freezy, Freshpak, Good Hope, Hardwood, Heartland, Honeyfield, House of Coffee, Ih Roastery, Jungle, Koo, Mandela Tea, Montagu, MrsH.S.Ball's, Nicoletta, On

The Go, Organic, Rooibos, Popcorn Delight, Pura, Robertsons, Royal Biltong, Rugani, Vital, Westfalia, Willow Creek, Yum Yum, and Zz2, as well as several items under LuLu private-label.

Customers can also sample a variety of food products

at the food sampling counters in the hypermarket, and get the taste and flavor of the country's cuisines from the special cuisine counters selling freshly prepared South African dishes and delicacies.

The promotion, held in compliance with all health and safety regulations issued by the concerned authorities, not only features food items at amazing prices, but also provides special offers on a wide selection of products, thereby delivering an even more exciting shopping experience to customers.

Displays and large cutouts of traditional monuments and other magnificent tourism sites and sights of South Africa, placed at all outlets of the hypermarket, spotlight the diversity of tourism attractions in the country and underlines why the promotion is indeed an 'Awesome South Africa 2021' event.

LuLu Hypermarket, which prides itself on importing high-quality food and non-food products from around the world and making them available to shoppers in Kuwait at exceedingly competitive prices, has once again proved itself with the 'Awesome South Africa 2021' promotion.

