

America

Staves off default

House sends debt limit hike to Biden

WASHINGTON, Oct 13, (AP) — The House has approved a short-term increase to the nation's debt limit, ensuring the federal government can continue fully paying its bills into December and temporarily averting an unprecedented default that would have decimated the economy.

The \$480 billion increase in the country's borrowing ceiling cleared the Senate last week on a party-line vote. The House approved it Tuesday so



Yellen

President Joe Biden can sign it into law this week. Treasury Secretary **Janet Yellen** had warned that steps to stave off a default on the country's debts would be exhausted by Monday, and from that point, the department would soon be unable to fully meet the government's financial obligations.

A default would have immense fallout on global financial markets built upon the bedrock safety of U.S. government debt. Routine government payments to Social Security beneficiaries, disabled veterans and active-duty military personnel would also be called into question.

The relief provided by passage of the legislation will only be temporary though, forcing Congress to revisit the issue in December - a time when lawmakers will also be laboring to complete federal spending bills and avoid a damaging government shutdown. The year end backlog raises risks for both parties and threatens a tumultuous close to Biden's first year in office.

"I'm glad that this at least allows us to prevent a totally self-made and utterly preventable economic catastrophe as we work on a longer-term plan," said Rep. Jim McGovern, D-Mass.

Republicans signaled the next debt limit debate won't be any easier and warned Democrats not to expect their help.

"Unless and until Democrats give up on their dream of a big-government, socialist America, Republicans cannot and will not support raising the debt limit and help them pave the superhighway to a great entitlement society," said Rep. Tom Cole, R-Okla.

Procedurally, the House took a single vote Tuesday that had the effect of passing the Senate bill. The measure passed by a party-line vote of 219-206.

Standoff

The present standoff over the debt ceiling eased when Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., agreed to help pass the short-term increase. But he insists he won't do so again.

In a letter sent Friday to Biden, McConnell said Democrats will have to handle the next debt-limit increase on their own using the same process they have tried to use to pass Biden's massive social spending and environment plan. Reconciliation allows legislation to pass the Senate with 51 votes rather than the 60 that's typically required. In the 50-50 split Senate, Vice President Kamala Harris gives Democrats the majority with her tiebreaking vote.

Lawmakers from both parties have used the debt ceiling votes as leverage for other priorities. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi threatened to vote against raising the debt ceiling when President Donald Trump was in office, saying she had no intention of supporting lifting the debt ceiling to enable Republicans to give another tax break to the rich. And Republicans in 2011 managed to coerce President Barack Obama into accepting about \$2 trillion in deficit cuts as a condition for increasing the debt limit - though lawmakers later rolled back some of those cuts.

Pelosi told reporters Tuesday that over the years Republicans and Democrats have voted against lifting the debt ceiling, "but never to the extent of jeopardizing it."

Pelosi offered her hope that Congress would lift the debt ceiling in a bipartisan way this December because of the stakes involved. But she also floated a bill sponsored by Rep. Brendan Boyle, D-Pa., that would transfer the duty of raising the debt limit away from Congress and vest it with the Treasury secretary, saying, "I think it has merit."

In his focus on the debt limit, McConnell has tried to link Biden's big federal government spending boost with the nation's rising debt load, even though they are separate and the debt ceiling will have to be increased or suspended regardless of whether Biden's \$3.5 trillion plan makes it into law.

"Your lieutenants on Capitol Hill now have the time they claimed they lacked to address the debt ceiling through standalone reconciliation, and all the tools to do it," McConnell said in a letter to the president. "They cannot invent another crisis and ask for my help."

Sided

McConnell was one of 11 Republicans who sided with Democrats to advance the debt ceiling reprieve to a final vote. Subsequently, McConnell and his GOP colleagues voted against final passage.

The debate over the debt ceiling has at times gotten personal. McConnell last week suggested that Democrats were playing "Russian roulette" with the economy because they had not dealt with the debt ceiling through the process he had insisted upon. He called out Pelosi for traveling to Europe last week.

"I can only presume she hopes the full faith and credit of the United States will get sorted out," McConnell said.

Pelosi did not let the hot pass. "Russian roulette from Moscow Mitch. Interesting," she said.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said Tuesday's vote marked the 50th time dating back to President Ronald Reagan that he has voted on extending the debt limit.

"Nobody has clean hands when it comes to the debt limit," he said.

Because the Senate bill only allowed for a stop-gap extension, Hoyer called it a "lousy deal."

"And then we're going to play this game one more time, a despicable and irresponsible act for adults who know better," Hoyer said.

Rep. Chip Roy, R-Texas, said he wanted to "thank" Hoyer for sharing that he had previously voted for raising the debt ceiling 49 times.

"When he came into this body, the debt was about a trillion dollars," Roy said. "Thank you, I guess, on behalf of the people of America who are staring at 28-and-a-half trillion dollars of debt."

The current debt ceiling is \$28.4 trillion. Both parties have contributed to that load with decisions that have left the government rarely operating in the black.

The calamitous ramifications of default are why lawmakers have been able to reach a compromise to lift or suspend the debt cap some 18 times since 2002, often after frequent rounds of brinkmanship.



The Capitol is seen as members of the House of Representatives vote on a short-term lift of the nation's debt limit and ensure the federal government can continue fully paying its bills into December, at the Capitol in Washington, Tuesday, Oct. 12, 2021. (AP)

Britain

Great Brexit brawl

EU offers to improve N Ireland trade

BRUSSELS, Oct 13, (AP) — The great Brexit brawl is heading into its next standoff on Wednesday when European Union concessions to improve trade in Northern Ireland look likely to be deemed insufficient by the United Kingdom.

Officials said that the EU's top Brexit official Maros Sefcovic is to propose major practical changes in the Byzantine system of customs and checks in Northern Ireland, which is UK territory but remained part of the EU's borderless trading market when the UK left the bloc last year. Under the new rules, goods must be checked between Britain and Northern Ireland.

However welcome such a cut in red tape might be to London, it is also insisting on a further, fundamental change. It wants the EU to cede final legal oversight of any trade disputes there, and leave it to independent arbitration.

EU officials, member nations and the bloc's parliament have bristled at the thought that the EU's Court of Justice would lose its preeminence over part of its trading market, and Sefcovic's room for maneuver is narrow in negotiations starting later this week.

"The role of the ECJ ... is not up for negotiation", said Nathalie Loiseau, a key EU parliamentarian from France.

Both Britain and the EU agreed it was essential to avoid a hard land border between Northern Ireland and EU member Republic of Ireland, since the island long was the scene of deadly sectarian violence before the border posts were brought down as a key part of the 1998 Good Friday agreement.

Wrangling

The EU thought years of Brexit wrangling were over when the government of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson officially signed the legally binding divorce agreement and the subsequent free trade deal at the end of last year.

Now, the EU says Johnson is seeking to row back on the Northern Ireland deal that he himself signed.

Charges of British duplicity and were given even more fodder on Wednesday when Johnson's former top aide Dominic Cummings suggested the UK government never intended to honor the withdrawal agreement it signed up to. "That would indicate that this is a gov-

ernment, an administration, that acted in bad faith and that message needs to be heard around the world," Irish Deputy Prime Minister Leo Varadkar told Irish broadcaster RTE.

"This is a British government that doesn't necessarily keep its word and doesn't necessarily honor the agreements it makes," he added.

France has similarly said that Britain can't be trusted in a dispute over fishing licenses that Paris said should have long been granted as part of the signed trade deal with London. French spokesman Gabriel Attal said the government intends to announce retaliation measures before the end of the month.

It is in such a heated context that Sefcovic now must negotiate with his U.K. counterpart David Frost to smooth trade in Northern Ireland.

He will be traveling with wide-ranging proposals to cut the paperwork for goods entering Northern Ireland, and eliminate impediments that have created irritants - such as when British Cumberland sausages couldn't make it onto Belfast dinner tables because of EU rules on chilled meat.



Britain's Kate, Duchess of Cambridge during a visit to the Royal Botanic Gardens, in south London, Wednesday, Oct 13, 2021 to take part in a Generation Earthshot event. (AP)

Europe

Germain, dies aged 101: Hubert Germain, the last of an elite group of decorated French Resistance fighters who helped liberate France from Nazi control in World War II, has died. He was 101.

The French president's office announced the death in a statement Tuesday, saying Germain "embodied a century of freedom." It didn't divulge details of his death.

Born in Paris on Aug. 6, 1920, Germain was taking his entry exam for France's Naval Academy in June 1940, just after the French state capitulated to the Nazis.

"Rising from his examination table, he preferred to hand in a blank paper rather than give a blank check to the France that had gone to bed, that had given in to resignation and renunciation," President **Emmanuel Macron's** office said in a statement. (AP)

Lava forces 800 to evacuate: Hundreds of people on La Palma in Spain's Canary Islands woke up Wednesday fearing for their homes and property after a new river of lava from an erupting volcano threatened to engulf another neighborhood on its way toward the Atlantic Ocean.

Island authorities ordered the evacuation of around 800 people from the coastal town of Los Llanos de Aridane on Tuesday after the lava

took a new course and put their homes in its probable path of destruction.

Around 6,000 people were immediately removed from the area in the hours after the initial Sept. 19 volcanic eruption, when their homes and farms were directly below the path of the volcano's first lava stream. (AP)

Over 140 migrants saved: Over 140 migrants were saved by Spanish rescuers on the perilous seaborne route from Africa to the Canary Islands, Spanish authorities said Wednesday.

Emergency services for the Canary Islands said rescuers saved 90 migrants - 47 from sub-Saharan Africa and 43 from northern Africa - from two boats intercepted near the island of Gran Canaria.

Another 55 migrants - all from sub-Saharan countries - were attended by emergency ser-

vices after being pulled from a boat in waters near the island of Fuerteventura. (AP)

6.3 earthquake jolts Crete: A strong earthquake jolted the Greek island of Crete on Tuesday, two weeks and a day after another tremor



Macron

Germain

killed a man and damaged hundreds of buildings. The Geodynamic Institute in Athens said the undersea earthquake had a preliminary magnitude of 6.3 and occurred at 12:24 p.m. local time (9:24 a.m. GMT) off the island's eastern coast.

It was felt as far as the coast of Turkey and on Cyprus, more than 500 kilometers (310 miles) to the east, authorities said.

Magnitude 4.1 and 4.6 quakes that were believed to be aftershocks took place minutes later, the institute in Athens said. Authorities reported a swell in the sea level around the eastern Cretan port of Ierapetra and advised residents to stay away from the coast.

There were no reports of serious damage or injuries, but a small church near the epicenter that was empty at the time of the quake partially collapsed. Authorities said police and fire crews were checking remote villages in eastern Crete. (AP)

Watch the stc Master Grand Finale LIVE and you could win a prize

stc Masters' grand finale open to viewers through live stream

Atoui: We welcome all gamers and those interested in watching some of the top gamers in Kuwait battle it out for the ultimate cash prize

Telecommunications Company - stc, a world-class digital leader providing innovative services and platforms to customers, enabling the digital transformation in Kuwait, announced that it will be live streaming the grand finale of the stc Masters tournament on masters.stc.com.kw, the stc Masters page on stc's website. Viewers will get to witness the winning champions of the gaming competition organized in collaboration with Zawaya Gaming.

stc issued a statement welcoming all viewers interested in watching the live stream finale to tune in this upcoming Friday and Saturday, 15-16 October 2021, to watch 176 finalists battle it out for the winning titles. The gaming competition consists of four games (FIFA, Call of Duty, PUBG, Fortnite), where finalists get a chance to qualify for the grand finale through weekly tournaments held over the past four months.



Amer Atoui

Chief Consumer Officer (CCO) of stc, Engineer Amer Atoui, said, "The number of gamers participating in the first season of stc Masters is a testament to the level of demand for such gaming competitions in Kuwait. We are proud to host the upcoming grand finale on

October 15 to 16, where we will crown the first champions of stc Masters. Having said that, we welcome all gamers and those interested in watching some of the top gamers in Kuwait battle it out for the ultimate cash prize."

Atoui added, "The successful outcome of the first season of stc Masters reflects our vision of becoming the preferred eSports hub in Kuwait. Season 1 will only serve as a steppingstone in stc's journey into the online gaming industry. We find it essential to enhance the lifestyles of our customers and will continue to introduce new concepts that aim to transform the local market across various industries."

stc Masters provides gamers with a chance to compete for a large prize pool amounting to over USD 50,000 awarded to winners throughout the season. Players who qualified across four gaming titles held over 16 tournaments will be eligible to participate in the grand finale. Following the end of the first season,



stc Masters will launch a longer and more extensive season that will maintain the same caliber and consistency of challenging local gamers to prove they are the best in Kuwait.

More information on the upcoming seasons will be displayed on masters.stc.com.kw, the stc Masters page on stc's website providing updates and news on the gaming competition.

For more details, customers can follow stc's official social media platforms, visit one of stc's branches, download mystc application, visit www.stc.com.kw