

NBC's *Today*

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: House Speaker Johnson on Government Shutdown]

CRAIG MELVIN: That sets us up perfectly for the Speaker of the House, Mike Johnson. Mr. Speaker, good morning to you, sir.

HOUSE SPEAKER MIKE JOHNSON: Morning, good to be with you, but it's a terrible day.

MELVIN: Indeed. Day three now of the shutdown. I know you were at the White House yesterday, after President Trump announced that he was considering permanently laying off federal workers, deep cuts for certain agencies. You get any indication from the President about specifics there?

JOHNSON: We're — we're still waiting on the specifics, but it is very important to note what has happened and why we're here. We're in day three of the shutdown, because 44 Senate Democrats have decided to reject the very simple, very clean, very conventional continuing resolution that we passed in the House to keep the government open. There is a lot of negotiations going on here, between the parties, about appropriations, about how to spend federal dollars and that is the regular process. But we ran out of time, because we came to September 30, the end of the fiscal year. We just needed to buy about seven weeks on the calendar to finish the process. This happens all the time. It happened 13 times during the Biden administration and Republicans never voted to shut the government down, but now the Democrats have flipped the script and they have decided to close it and real people are being harmed. We got to bring this to an end.

MELVIN: To your point, though, Mr. Speaker, and I want to show folks at home some recent polling on who is to blame for the shutdown, and you probably have seen some the polls, but here they are, four different polls, *Washington Post*, Marist, Morning Consult, *New York Times*/Sienna majority of Americans are blaming Republicans for the shutdown, and not by slim margins. Are you concerned at all that you're losing the messaging battle with voters?

JOHNSON: Well, the Democrats are trying to make this about politics and I'm not surprised by some of the polls because the mainstream media is advancing their narrative. But let's make very clear what has happened here. We have done exactly what is always done very clean, very simple resolution to keep the government open so that we can negotiate all these other issues. They rejected it because they're trying to make a political play. Chuck Schumer is the leader of Democrats in the Senate and everybody knows what this is about. He's afraid of the far left flank of his party, and so he has to put up a fight against president trump and the Republican majorities. That's what this is about. But real people are getting harmed in the process because you profiled a couple of the folks there at the opening of the show who are being harmed, we have troops and TSA agents and border patrol agents wog without pay and you have medical

services and veterans benefits and nutrition programs for women, infants and children that are not being provided right now because they're playing games. They need to pass the resolution that was sent over there, that is the Senate, they voted against three times already to get the government open, so congress can work again. The ball is in the court of the Democrats, not the Republicans. The Republicans have done our job, done our work, and now chuck Schumer and 43 of his colleagues have to decide to do the right thing.

MELVIN: And as you know, Mr. Speaker, Democrats have said this is about access to healthcare and lower premiums. But I want to talk more about this broader concept of — you mentioned the 750,000 furloughed workers and you've thousands of workers who — federal workers working right now, just not being compensated for that work — this idea that they're being used as pawns in this tug of war between Republicans and Democrats. A lot of folks in this country are absolutely tired of the unending political battles and now these battles are actually affecting people's paychecks. Bottom line, what would you say to those folks who feel like they're being used as pawns in a game?

JOHNSON: Craig, I agree 100 percent. It is disgusting. I'm so sick of these games and that's what's being played. What they're not telling you, they claim this is an argument about health care, they were trying to provide for healthcare, then why did Chuck Schumer counterproposal include a reduction of \$50 billion for rural hospitals? That's literally in his counterproposal. They want to spend \$1.5 trillion more on — on their far-left programs. They want to give taxpayer funded benefits to illegal aliens again. We cut all that out because it's — it doesn't follow our law and doesn't follow common sense.

MELVIN: Mr. Speaker —

JOHNSON: No, it is. Look at page 57 —

MELVIN: — to — to your —

JOHNSON: — section 2141 —

MELVIN: — Mr. Speaker —

JOHNSON: — of the bill that Chuck Schumer filed.

MELVIN: — I had a hankering feeling you were going to bring that up and I actually did look at it —

JOHNSON: Yep, yep.

MELVIN: — and we can't get to it, obviously, on — on the show, but that last bit was a — [JOHNSON LAUGHS] — bit misleading, this idea that they —

JOHNSON: Nope. No, it's not. No it's not.

MELVIN: — Mr. Speaker —

JOHNSON: No, it — they wanna cut out —

MELVIN: — again, we're not going to get into the reason.

JOHNSON: — they want to repeal and reverse the — the reforms we made and that would add \$200 billion taxpayer dollars, taxpayer funds —

MELVIN: But, Mr. — Mr. Speaker —

JOHNSON: — to illegal aliens.

MELVIN: — Mr. Speaker, again —

JOHNSON: Go to my website, speaker.gov. You can see it yourself.

MELVIN: — Mr. Speaker, to — to — to my earlier point, this — this conversation we're having as important, as it may be, to folks who are just sitting and watching and listening and thinking, you know what? These guys can't keep the government open. In the United States of America, in 2025, Democrats and Republicans can't even work together to provide a functioning government.

JOHNSON: Well, the Republicans are working right now. They've done their job. We passed a bipartisan bill out of the House to keep the government open. So, if you're frustrated, call the 44 Senate Democrats who are holding this up.

MELVIN: To —

JOHNSON: It is their votes that can open the government again and get it working for the people. That's a simple fact.

MELVIN: — tech — Mr. Speaker, technically, not to get too far in the weeds, I know you run the upper chamber and the lower chamber, the senate could reopen the government if they abandon the super majority rule, if they just decided to invoke the so-called nuclear option, they could open the government. At some point, do you consider that? Would you call on your Senate colleagues to employ that?

JOHNSON: Yeah, in the House we always talk about that, because we do it by bare majorities, as you know in the House. But that's their tradition, that's their — they think that is a sacred rule that they have to keep, so you got to argue with the Senate about it. But it is frustrating for us in the lower chamber. as you say, in the people's house because we do everything by a simple majority and we did do that. We got it done. And we're proud to send that product over, but now we await the upper chamber.

MELVIN: Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time this morning. I appreciate you getting up early. Speaker Mike Johnson, thank you. We should note —

JOHNSON: Thanks, Craig.

MELVIN: — House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries will join us on Monday.