

# Tyler Wenzlaff: Government shutdown averted - for now

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In a dramatic turn of events, Congress passed a last-minute spending bill that averts a government shutdown. The bill, which passed the House on a 335-91 vote and Senate by a vote of 88-9, temporarily funds the government through November 17, 2023.

After the House failed to pass its first continuing resolution (CR) on Sept. 29 that included border security measures and additional spending cuts, Republicans were joined by Democrats to pass a new, continuing resolution, [H.R. 5860](#). This resolution funds the government without funding cuts, aid to Ukraine or the inclusion of H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act. The Senate followed suit later that evening. President Biden signed the bill shortly before midnight on September 30, allowing Congress more time to negotiate final Fiscal Year 2024 (FY24) appropriations legislation.

Below is a summary of H.R. 5860, Making Continuing Appropriations for FY24 from the [American Farm Bureau Federation](#):

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- Provides \$16 billion in supplemental disaster aid for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA);
- Extends the Animal Drug and Animal Generic Drug User Fee agreements through FY28;
- Extends Livestock Mandatory Reporting Program through November 17;
- Does not contain funding reductions;
- Does not contain additional aid for Ukraine efforts; and
- Does not contain H.R. 2, the Secure the Border Act of 2023.

The House is now expected to take up individual appropriations bills during the upcoming floor periods.

It remains to be seen though if the House can pass an Agriculture Appropriations bill and what will be included in the spending plan. This annual legislation plays a pivotal role in funding crucial agricultural programs and agencies, including the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It also influences policies related to food safety, nutrition assistance programs, rural development and more.

One of the primary reasons behind the failure of the Agriculture Appropriations Bill is the deep political divisions in the House of Representatives. In recent years, partisan gridlock has become increasingly common on Capitol Hill, making it challenging to pass crucial legislation. These divisions ultimately led to its failure.

The failure of the Agriculture Appropriations Bill in the House of Representatives underscores the challenges of navigating the complex political and budgetary landscape in Washington, D.C. The agriculture bill often becomes a battleground for partisan disputes, with disagreements over funding levels for various programs and ideological differences on issues like environmental regulations and agricultural subsidies. The consequences of this legislative setback are far-reaching, affecting farmers, consumers and the future of American agriculture.

Complicating matters is the disposing of Kevin McCarthy as Speaker of the House. The Speaker of the House plays a crucial role in the functioning of the U.S. Congress. The Speaker, as the presiding officer of the House of Representatives, has significant influence over the legislative agenda and the process of passing bills, including the Agricultural Appropriations Act.

If there is no Speaker of the House, it can have several potential effects on Congress's ability to pass legislation, schedule floor session, set a legislative agenda and coordinate legislative efforts with the Senate. The House could have a Speaker as soon as this week but it could drag on and, until a new Speaker is elected, Congress is paralyzed.

As stakeholders continue to grapple with these challenges, it is essential for lawmakers to find common ground, prioritize the needs of the agricultural sector and work together to pass a comprehensive and effective appropriations bill that supports the industry's growth, sustainability and resilience in the face of evolving

challenges.

The previous Agriculture Appropriations bill failure is concerning but [Wisconsin Farm Bureau](#) will continue to work with Wisconsin's federal delegation to support programs Wisconsin farmers utilize. The future of our food supply and rural communities depends on it.

*-Wenzlaff is director of national affairs for the [Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation](#), the state's largest general farm organization representing farms of all sizes, commodities and management styles.*