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CRUZ JOINS HOUSE CONSERVATIVES ON DEFUNDING IMMIGRATION POLICY

By Janet Hook
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Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX) Wednesday joined forces with House conservatives to fight GOP leaders' proposal to avoid a government shutdown while opposing President Barack Obama's immigration initiative.

With government funding due to run out Dec. 11, Mr. Cruz issued a statement calling for a short-term government spending bill that includes a ban on funding for Mr. Obama's immigration initiative – a harder line approach than the plan being advanced by House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) that would fund the government for a full year and put off the fight over immigration policy until next year.

A group of House conservatives, at a press briefing Tuesday, objected to the leadership measure because they wanted more forceful action against the Obama administration policy and because they wanted a shorter spending bill to allow the new GOP Congress to rewrite budget priorities. That emerging opposition has raised questions about whether Mr. Boehner would have enough votes to pass the government spending bill.

Mr. Cruz, a potential presidential candidate in 2016, met Wednesday morning with some of those House members to talk strategy, and is scheduled to appear at a noon press conference on immigration with conservative leaders, Reps. Steve King of Iowa and Michelle Bachmann of Minnesota.

Mr. Cruz, a potential 2016 presidential candidate, has been vigorously objecting to Mr. Obama's executive action to block deportation of millions of undocumented immigrants. In his statement Wednesday, he reiterated his call for the Senate to block confirmation of all executive branch nominations not related to national security until Mr. Obama ends his immigration policy and added, "Republicans in Congress should use every tool at our disposal – our constitutional checks and balances – to stop President Obama's amnesty."

Republicans have been debating how effective they can be in actually trying to block Mr. Obama's plan to shield millions of illegal immigrants from deportation. The primary agency responsible for implementing the proposal, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, funds itself through fees, and would continue operating during a government shutdown.

Mr. Cruz in the past has built alliances with House conservatives on issues, such as last year's funding fights that ended in a shutdown, that have irked Mr. Boehner – a tension that has led House Democrats to dub the senator "Speaker Cruz" for his influence among House conservatives.