

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

JEH JOHNSON ON DHS IMPASSE: CONGRESS JEOPARDIZES NATIONAL SECURITY

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February 22, 2015

Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson suggested Sunday that Congress would be jeopardizing national security if it withholds his agency's funding to undermine President Barack Obama's executive action shielding millions of illegal immigrants from deportation. The administration is appealing a federal court's ruling that blocked the executive order.

"There are some who want to defund our executive actions and do it in a way that holds up the entire budget of homeland security for this nation. That is unacceptable from a public safety, homeland security view," Mr. Johnson said on Fox News Sunday. Without congressional action, DHS funding expires Friday at midnight.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, a Republican who spearheaded the lawsuit by 26 states against the president's immigration order, did not directly address efforts to defund the department. "What Congress must do is to continue to ensure that the rule of law and the United States Constitution as constructed are fulfilled, and that means it's the Congress, not the president that establishes what our immigration laws are," Mr. Abbott said on CBS.

South Carolina Sen. Lindsey Graham, a Republican who has backed legislation to allow illegal immigrants to earn citizenship, said he agreed with the court's ruling on the president's action. But in an interview on ABC News, he added that "the worst possible outcome for this nation is to defund the Department of Homeland Security given the multiple threats we face to our homeland. And I will not be part of that."

Mr. Graham, a potential presidential candidate, said that Republicans should challenge the executive order in court, not in the budget process, or "we'll get blamed as a party." Polls showed that views of the GOP soured after the government shutdown in 2013.

Another possible Republican contender in 2016, Indiana Gov. Mike Pence, said he was proud that his state had joined the lawsuit against the president's immigration order. "Congress using the power of the purse is altogether appropriate," he said on Fox News Sunday. "Why does the administration need money for what the federal court said they can't do?"

Mr. Pence also criticized President Obama's approach to combating Islamic terrorists and said he should be clear about identifying the Islamic State as a religious extremist group. "I don't think we hear a robust strategy to really drive this terrorist army not only out of Iraq by also out of existence," he said. "The American people are understandably frustrated with a president who lectures us on the Crusades but is unwilling to call Islamic extremism by name."

Mr. Johnson defended the president's approach, pointing to Muslim leaders in the U.S. who say, "ISIL is attempting to hijack my religion. Our religion is about peace and brotherhood." Mr. Johnson added: "To refer to ISIL as occupying any part of the Islamic theology is playing on a battlefield that they would like us to be on. I think to call them some form of Islam gives them more dignity than they deserve."

Ohio Gov. John Kasich, a Republican, predicted that the U.S. will ultimately have to deploy ground troops to fight the Islamic State.

"We're not going to solve this problem just by bombing, it never fixes it all," Mr. Kasich said on CNN. "At some point it will require boots on the ground from the world to be able to deal with this problem, and I would rather deal with it sooner than later."