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## OBAMA PUSHES GOP-LED CONGRESS ON HOMELAND SECURITY FUNDING

By Carol E. Lee  
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President Barack Obama used the unveiling of his nearly \$4 trillion fiscal 2016 budget on Monday to sharply challenge congressional Republicans to approve funding for the Homeland Security Department, now caught up in GOP protests over his executive action on immigration.

Mr. Obama also warned Republican leaders that, going forward, he would reject any budget resolution that doesn't reverse spending caps set in a previous bipartisan deficit-reduction deal, known as the sequester.

His remarks struck a confrontational tone as the White House and the Republican-led Congress enter a new round of fiscal battles.

"I know there are Republicans who disagree with my approach," Mr. Obama said in remarks at the Homeland Security Department. "If they have other ideas for how we can keep America safe, grow our economy while helping middle-class families feel some sense of economic security, I welcome their ideas. But their numbers have to add up."

Republicans derided Mr. Obama's budget as a political document empty of steps toward compromise with the GOP-controlled Congress.

"Today, President Obama laid out a plan for more taxes, more spending and more of the Washington gridlock that has failed middle-class families," House Speaker John Boehner (R., Ohio) said in a statement, criticizing the plan for not eliminating the annual federal budget deficit over its 10-year time frame. "It contains no solutions to address the drivers of our debt and no plan to fix our entire tax code to help foster growth and create jobs."

One of Congress's most immediate priorities is legislation that would fund the Homeland Security Department from Feb. 27 through Sept. 30. Mr. Obama has insisted lawmakers pass a so-called clean bill that doesn't chip away at his immigration policy, although he has left open the possibility of accepting legislation that includes some amendments.

Republicans are angered over Mr. Obama's actions late last year to protect around four million undocumented immigrants from deportation.

The president accused Republicans of choosing to "play politics" with economic and national-security issues by still debating the bill three weeks before the Homeland Security Department's funding expires.

"The work you do hangs in the balance," he said. "And if Republicans let homeland-security funding expire, it's the end to any new initiatives in the event that a new threat emerges."

But behind the sharp rhetoric is a president hoping to net some compromises with Republicans on fiscal policy. He described his budget as a blueprint for that debate, which

he said should take into account an economy that has improved since past budget fights, which focused primarily on deficit reduction.

Recent economic growth should refocus the discussion, Mr. Obama said, as he made the case for completely undoing the sequester and adopting new spending proposals aimed at rebuilding the nation's infrastructure and boosting the middle class.

"We've got to put politics aside, pass a budget that funds our national-security priorities at home and abroad and gives middle-class families the security they need to get ahead in the new economy," Mr. Obama said. "This is one of our most basic and most important responsibilities as a government, so I'm calling on Congress to get this done."