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SENATE DEMOCRATS EXPECTED TO BLOCK GOP MOVE ON OBAMA IMMIGRATION POLICY

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Senate Democrats are expected to block the chamber from considering House-passed legislation aimed at thwarting President Barack Obama's executive action to shield millions of illegal immigrants from deportation.

The procedural vote Tuesday afternoon on the bill, which would also fund the Homeland Security Department through September, is expected to be an early illustration of the limits of the new GOP majority's power in the Senate. Republicans control only 54 of the chamber's seats, and 60 votes are usually needed for most bills to clear procedural hurdles.

Ahead of the Senate vote, House Republicans said they have done their part to try to gut Mr. Obama's immigration policies in recent years, including his decision last November to bypass Congress and shield millions of illegal immigrants from deportation on his own.

The bill passed by the House last month would also end a 2012 program that offers safe harbor to young people brought to the U.S. illegally as children, and some 600,000 people in the program would again become subject to deportation.

"We won this fight in the House. Now the fight must be won in the United States Senate," House Speaker John Boehner (R., Ohio) told reporters on Tuesday.

An impasse over the House immigration bill would jeopardize funding for the Homeland Security Department, which expires on Feb. 27. Last year, GOP leaders opted to fund the rest of the government through September, but split off funding for Homeland Security to use it as leverage in the fight over the president's immigration policy.

In the face of Senate Democratic resistance, Republicans appear to have few options to clear legislation through the Senate that would overturn the administration's action. But many House Republicans said they are unwilling to simply pass a bill funding Homeland Security without a bigger fight over immigration. One option GOP leaders are considering is passing a short-term extension of Homeland Security's current funding for 30 or 60 days, according to GOP aides.

A short-term extension wouldn't include some new funds agreed to in bipartisan negotiations late last year. That agreement, for instance, would fund more than 4,000 additional detention beds used to hold those who have crossed the border while they wait for court appearances, compared with an extension of current funding. A short-term extension wouldn't include funding for any new family detention facilities.

A stopgap funding measure would also exclude \$25 million dedicated toward improving the Secret Service after an intruder was able to get over the White House fence in September 2014, as well as another \$25.5 million for hiring and training more agents to protect presidential candidates during the 2016 election cycle, both of which are included in the Homeland Security spending agreement.

"We lose a lot of really good stuff in that bill" with a short-term extension, said Rep. John Carter (R., Texas), chairman of the Appropriations Homeland Security subcommittee.

Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D., Nev.) said Tuesday morning that Republicans shouldn't use the need to fund government agencies such as DHS as a way to try to overturn Mr. Obama's executive action. "Republicans are doing everything within their power to make sure homeland security is held hostage to matters that don't relate to homeland security," Mr. Reid said.

But some Republicans said a short-term funding bill would give them more time to fight for a change in Mr. Obama's immigration policies.

Rep. Kevin Cramer (R., N.D.) said a short-term extension would be appropriate if the Senate can't pass legislation blocking the president's executive action before Homeland Security funding runs out. "This issue of the president's overreach, his amnesty overreach, demands more of a fight," Mr. Cramer said.

Other Republicans have suggested they would be willing to letting the Homeland Security's funding lapse if Democrats block all efforts to reverse Mr. Obama's solo steps on immigration.

"The Congress of the United States is not helpless when it confronts the president," Mr. Sessions said on the Senate floor last week. "Colleagues, we've got to get out from under our desks here. Are you afraid to say to the president... 'We don't agree with this, and we're not going to fund this.'"

If the funding were to lapse, most of the department's workers would still have to work because they are considered essential employees, but they wouldn't be paid until an agreement was reached.