

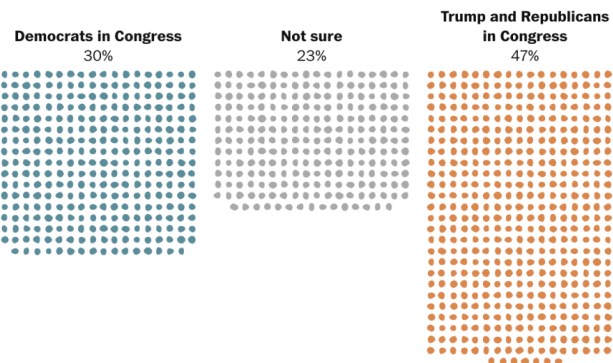
RIGHT WINGERS DICK-STEPPING THEIR WAY THROUGH SHUTDOWN

I don't think Democrats have done a particularly good job of winning the shutdown.

But the Republican Party has taken every opportunity to step on their own dicks in ways that might actually backfire.

Democrats are starting with a surprising advantage. In one of the first polls after the shutdown started, WaPo showed that far more people blamed Republicans than Democrats, a much higher number than G Elliot Morris showed in his poll before the shutdown (possibly because WaPo included Trump in their question).

Who do you think is mainly responsible for the federal government partially shutting down?



Even as voters are looking for compromise, right wingers spent much of the last two days posting dickish gotchas for their social media trolls, starting with the series of racist posts featuring someone in a sombrero.



These aren't even *funny* trolls, and to the extent that they lead to questions where Mike Johnson or JD Vance defend them by claiming that Dems should just ignore them, they make right wingers look like they're not serious about reopening government.

Both the White House and their Rapid Response account similarly posted a very brief gotcha from an appearance Jeanne Shaheen made on Fox and Friends. Jeanne Shaheen is probably the key person in any negotiations to peel off enough Democrats to reopen government, and Republicans want to maintain good will with her. Five minutes into the interview, Lawrence Jones played a debate clip from 2019, claiming the entire Democratic party wants to give undocumented people health insurance.

The White House reposted
Rapid Response 47 @RapidResponse47 · 21h
Democrat Sen. Jeanne Shaheen: I haven't heard anybody in my party saying
illegals should get taxpayer-funded health care!

ROLLS THE TAPE

Fox: "That's literally every member of your party from moderate to more
progressive..."



Shaheen's response was not bad; she accused, "you're making it an issue, Vice President Vance is making it an issue." Shaheen distinguished the current debate about the current health insurance plans.

The full clip was even stronger. Before the gotcha, Shaheen described that over 70% of the people who rely on ACA subsidies are in states Trump won; 56% are in Republican districts. She described her goal was to make sure we're not doubling the premiums for 24 million Americans and kicking 4 million Americans off their health insurance.

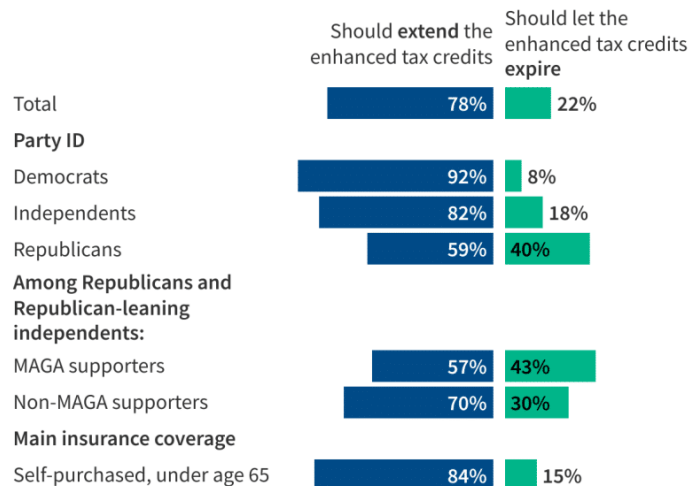
Shaheen was explaining much of this to Fox viewers who don't yet know these details. KFF has a poll showing that 61% of Americans are not yet aware of looming ACA increases, but when asked, huge majorities support extending them – *including 57% of MAGAs.*

Figure 2

Three in Four Adults Support Extending Enhanced Tax Credits for ACA Marketplace Coverage, Including Most of Those With Self-Purchased Insurance

As you may know, in 2021 Congress increased the financial help provided through tax credits available to some people who purchase health insurance through the Affordable Care Act marketplace to help them afford their premiums. These enhanced tax credits are set to expire at the end of 2025.

Do you think Congress should extend these enhanced tax credits, or should they let these enhanced tax credits expire?



Note: See topline for full question wording.

Source: KFF Health Tracking Poll (September 23-29, 2025)

KFF

ACA subsidies weren't the only thing Shaheen exposed Fox viewers to: She also described that EMTALA, which requires emergency rooms to treat everyone and is the only way that undocumented people do get coverage, was put in place by Ronald Reagan.

She dismissed Jones' quip about the WaPo editorial warning Democrats that they had fallen into a trap because Trump would start cutting programs by noting he was already doing that. So she looked smart on Trump's breakfast pabulum, and they tried to discredit her with a gotcha that didn't even land.

Shaheen's point that Trump was already cutting was the only reference she made to impoundment (and she didn't describe it as such).

But Russ Vought has been busy making that point.

Wednesday I argued that for Trump to use cuts to attempt to pressure Democrats, he needs to make that visible, which might have the same effect Elon Musk's boisterous face on DOGE did.

What changes with Trump's promise that he's going to start retaliating against Democrats – on top of the fact that 40% of the workers he will be targeting are Trump voters and on top of the fact that the policies he will target are the ones that help average Americans and so are popular – is that to use this as leverage, Trump *has to claim credit*.

Trump has to make visible all the damage he's doing to the services government offers.

That doesn't change the legal reality (that, with SCOTUS' blessing, Trump is usurping the constitutional powers of Congress). It has the ability to change the politics. It'll be DOGE all over again, where Elon Musk's loud bragging about the damage he was doing made him an easy political target.

Now it's Russ Vought's turn to become the villain in the popular understanding.

And so he did.

Hours after I wrote that, Vought announced the government (this was actually Department of Transportation) was cutting two big NYC transport projects, including the rail tunnel that connects the city with its suburbs in New Jersey.

Mikie Sherrill, who had been giving Democrats pains because of a single close gubernatorial poll (while others showed her with a bigger lead), immediately responded by making it a campaign issue.



Mikie Sherrill
@MikieSherrill



The Trump administration is now attacking the Gateway Tunnel.

@Jack4NJ said there's not a single issue where he disagrees with Trump, and he promised to never take them to court.

As governor, I will fight this tooth-and-nail and sue the Trump administration to finish this critical, job-creating infrastructure project to reduce congestion and improve quality of life in New Jersey.



Russ Vought @russvought · 2h

Specifically, the Hudson Tunnel Project and the Second Ave Subway.
x.com/russvought/sta...

4:35 PM · Oct 1, 2025 · 30.2K Views

Then Vought announced \$8 billion in funding cuts in the swing states where both Senators are Democrats.



Russ Vought @russvought · Oct 1



Nearly \$8 billion in Green New Scam funding to fuel the Left's climate agenda is being cancelled. More info to come from @ENERGY.

The projects are in the following states: CA, CO, CT, DE, HI, IL, MD, MA, MN, NH, NJ, NM, NY, OR, VT, WA

As Aaron Fritschner has been calculating, many of these projects hit Republican congressional districts, including swing state districts like David Valadao, Young Kim, and Mike Lawler that Republicans would need to



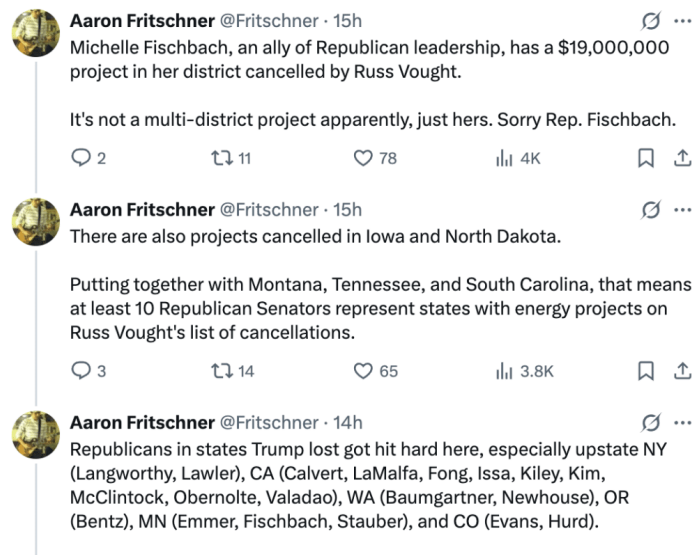
Aaron Fritschner
@Fritschner



Russ Vought is cancelling a \$70 million project in Minnesota that spans three congressional districts, two of which are represented by Republicans.

One of those districts is represented by the third highest ranking Republican in the House, Whip Tom Emmer

10:05 PM · Oct 2, 2025 · 44.1K Views



Politico has more, including a link to Rosa DeLauro's breakdown of what got cut, organized by Congressional district.

Terminating funding to the hydrogen "hub" projects in California and the Pacific Northwest – which were to receive \$1.2 billion and \$1 billion, respectively, through the 2021 infrastructure law – comes despite bipartisan support for those projects. The Pacific Northwest hydrogen hub includes GOP-led Montana, as well as Washington state and Oregon.

Washington state Republican Rep. Dan Newhouse, whose district would be home in part to the Pacific Northwest hub, had touted the project in an April op-ed, saying it "will support the administration's focus on energy independence and domestic energy production."

Americans may no longer go to the same schools as their political opponents. But they do rely on the same infrastructure.

Note, technically both of these cuts were end-of-year rescissions, not shutdown cuts. Maybe Vought will find a way to hurt only Democrats in whatever he has planned next. But even there, Republicans are warning that it may backfire.

But even pro-DOGE Republicans are warning Office of Management and Budget Director Russ Vought to go slow.

“Russ is less politically in tune than the president,” said Sen. Kevin Cramer, R-N.D., a member of the Senate DOGE Caucus. “We, as Republicans, have never had so much moral high ground on a government funding bill in our lives. ... I just don’t see why we would squander it, which I think is the risk of being aggressive with executive power in this moment.”

Worse, anonymous sources point out that if Vought attempted to RIF people, he would be incurring costs, breaking the law in new ways, something that could put Vought’s larger victories in firing people at risk.

For example, the Antideficiency Act prohibits the federal government from obligating or expending any money not appropriated by Congress. It also forbids incurring new expenses during a shutdown, when funding has lapsed; some federal government officials have concluded that the prohibition could extend to the kind of severance payments that accompany reductions in force.

[snip]

Asked about the legal concerns, Rachel Cauley, the White House OMB communications director, said in a written statement that “issuing RIFs is an excepted activity to fulfill the President’s constitutional authority to supervise and control the Executive Branch, similar to conducting foreign policy.”

Meanwhile, one of the issues that I thought was just going to be create a background of malaise – the soybean crisis and the Argentine bailout –

just became part of the fight as well. For starters, after some equivocating, Trump decided to shut down USDA's Farm Service Agency, meaning the farmers who've been pummeled by Trump's tariffs will face delays in getting loans.

Thousands of USDA's Farm Service Agency offices that help producers across the country access loans and other services are completely shuttered and only available for "emergency scenarios." Even top Republican lawmakers acknowledge the pain hitting their own constituents, despite assurances from President Donald Trump that Democrats will bear the brunt of the shutdown.

"FSA employees are important to the farmers that we all represent. Again, that's an unnecessary consequence of the Schumer shutdown," Senate Majority Leader John Thune, who represents an agriculture-heavy state, said in an interview Wednesday.

Those offices normally close during shutdown. But Trump officials had previously debated contingency options to keep at least some of them open since this year's funding lapse would hit at an especially poor time for farmers who are already reeling from Trump's tariff fallout and currently preparing for harvest season.

Ultimately, the Trump administration decided to close the offices, allowing one farm loan officer to be on call in most areas if the shutdown drags on longer than 10 days. Other select employees will be on call for natural disaster response.

Partly because of the bailout Trump just gave Argentina, Trump needs to pay off the right wing farmers whose lives he has ruined with his trade war. But he doesn't have the money to do that –

or an easy way to get it.

The Trump administration is planning to roll out the first tranche of bailout payments for farmers in the coming weeks, likely using billions of dollars in funding from an internal USDA account, according to three people with direct knowledge of the matter.

But it won't be enough: USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation fund – which President Donald Trump previously tapped to provide \$28 billion in farm aid during his first-term trade war with China – has just \$4 billion left in the account. Trump officials, including those at the Treasury Department, are looking at how to tap tariff receipts or other funding to supplement the payments without triggering a messy fight in Congress.

The timing of the actual aid rollout is also tricky given that it's unlikely to happen or even be possible during the ongoing government shutdown that's shuttered vast swaths of the Agriculture Department.

Trump officials are still working on estimates of how big the first tranche of aid will be, according to the three people, who were granted anonymity to share private details. But the president has been posting his promises to aid American soybean farmers on social media in recent days.

Republicans seem certain that they'll peel off enough Democrats – starting with Shaheen – in the Senate to reopen government. They may be right. Or, right wingers may continue to step on their own dicks making the case that Democratic funding priorities are right.