

The Political Center Gets The Last Word On The Shutdown

The longest shutdown in history finally came to an end as eight Senators (7 Democrats and 1 Independent who caucuses with Democrats) voted with Republicans to reopen the government. There are many reasons no one wins in a shutdown, especially the American people. It was a base-driven political exercise that was ended by the political center in the Senate. As one of the eight, Senator Angus King, [said to CNN](#): the shutdown “*wasn't accomplishing anything ... The chances of solving this problem through the shutdown were zero.*”

From our [mid-October survey](#) at an earlier point in the shutdown, Democrats had some compelling statements about health care and cost of living. As shown in the chart below, the two strongest statements for Republicans emphasized the necessity of opening the government and consequences for a continued stalemate. It also became obvious (as highlighted on [CNBC](#) and [other outlets](#)) that the expiration of the temporary COVID subsidies resulted from policy Democrats created. In that political context, the most effective position for Republicans was attracting more centrist Democrats to vote with them to open the government, overriding the progressive holdouts. As a result, the Democrats' coalition crumbled.

Democratic statements (believe-do not believe)	Overall	Indep
The cost of living in America is way too high. And the Republican health care crisis is making things worse.	59-30	64-24
Americans are facing a crisis of rising health care costs. If the government shuts down, it's because Republicans would rather shut it down rather than help people afford health care and deal with the increased cost of living.	53-35	56-29
Republican statements (believe-do not believe)	Overall	Indep
The government shutdown comes as service members and federal employees are set to miss their next paycheck, critical food assistance for low income women and children are in dire jeopardy, states are staring down an economic catastrophe, and layoffs could be imminent.	59-25	59-21
Three Senate Democrats joined Republicans and voted with them because they know a shutdown hurts Americans. It's not about which party wins or loses or who gets blamed. This is about opening the government back up for the American people.	53-27	49-28

As Senator King described, Democrats miscalculated by assuming Republicans would negotiate on their demands, but Republicans did not flinch in insisting the government must reopen first.

On the Democratic strategy: *Democrats thought that the pressure of the shutdown plus the impending increases or decreases in the credits, which would have increases in ACA premiums, that those two things would stimulate the Republicans to do something about these tax credits...it didn't happen.*

On the Republican response: *The Republicans' position all along was very clear: we'll talk about health care, we'll talk about the ACA, but not until the shutdown is over....They've said continuously they're not going to even discuss it as long as we're in the shutdown, and that's what they've done.*

Senate Majority Leader Thune deserves huge credit for navigating the longest shutdown in history and keeping his Members unified – something Democrats couldn't do. As Democrats found out, the party bases have the loudest voices, but the political center in the Senate got the last word.

Have a good weekend.

David & Myra