



Federal air traffic controller union members protest the partial U.S. federal government shutdown Jan. 10 in Washington. (CNS photo/Reuters/Jonathan Ernst)



by Pat Perriello

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Just a few words on the government shutdown and the reopening of the government. Congress has three weeks to reach a deal that the president will sign, or the government could shut down again. I feel confident in saying that is not going to happen. It is inconceivable to me that after all the pain of the last five weeks, politicians or the president would shut the government down again in three weeks. I sure hope this prediction of mine does not turn out to be wrong.

I would go further. I also don't believe President Trump will declare a national emergency. Many consider this the vehicle he will use as an off-ramp to demonstrate how hard he is fighting to build his wall. But there is serious opposition to this maneuver even within his own party. The bottom line, I believe, is the president will have to keep the government open because Republicans in the Senate will not permit another shutdown.

When I [wrote about the shutdown](#) on January 14th, I indicated that something had to be done legislatively to ensure this never happens again. There is some [talk](#) about that now. It can never be acceptable to shut down the government for a political reason. The government work force cannot be considered a tool to use as leverage to get one's way on a policy matter. Congress has been established to debate policy issues, but not to hold government workers hostage to win a debate.

This has turned out to be a shutdown over nothing. The president sought 5.7 billion dollars to build a wall no one wanted. It turns out the shutdown cost the government [11 billion dollars](#). This kind of behavior on the part of politicians and the president is not acceptable.

Clearly the president has taken the brunt of the blame for this shutdown. That is as it should be, but it does not mean the Democrats are blameless. Personally, I would put the blame at about 70 percent Trump and 30 percent Democrats. I do think it was necessary for Democrats to stand firm and not give in on the President's demands, but I think more needed to be done, if only behind the scenes, to work towards a resolution to the crisis the president precipitated.

More to the point, Democrats need to work with Republicans in Congress to put together a deal that Congress is comfortable with and which can pressure the President to sign on the dotted line. It is also time to dampen down the rhetoric and take a more conciliatory line.

A strong bipartisan committee has been named to work on reaching a deal. I believe this committee will produce a deal that will enable the president to claim he has what he will call a down payment on his wall. At the same time Democrats will be able to say they have given the president no money for his wall. The semantics of the arguments now need to be used to make a deal everyone can sign on to, instead of highlighting differences that mitigate against a deal. I believe the president will sign such a deal.

That represents the stuff of compromise. It represents government working, and it is certainly time for us to see government working in this country for a change.

[Pat Perriello, a retired educator from the Baltimore City Public Schools, served as the coordinator of Guidance and Counseling Services and an associate professor at Johns Hopkins University.]

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