

From VOA Learning English, this is As It Is.

Welcome to the program. I'm Caty Weaver.

President Obama, the United States Congress and the American people face another federal budget dispute this month. We talk about one part of the debate that could shut down the government.

Later, we tell about President Obama's visit to Sweden this week.

The United States Congress has returned to official business following a break in August. Lawmakers this month face a decision on how to continue financing the federal government. Mario Ritter reports.

October 1st is the first day of the government's fiscal, or spending, year. A group of Republican Party lawmakers is threatening to force federal agencies to suspend operations. They say they will not approve a spending bill unless Congress denies money for the health care law, known as the Affordable Care Act.

President Obama signed the act into law in 2010. But the battle over its enactment continues. Groups for and against the law have purchased television advertising in hopes of winning public support.

“It’s nice to see somebody is looking out for the little guy. The law works.”

“Please, call the number on your screen and tell Congress, ‘don’t fund Obamacare.’”

Some Republicans want Congress to stop paying for the health care law as part of any agreement to finance federal spending in October. Critics of the law include Senator Ted Cruz of Texas.

“It isn’t working. It’s hurting health care and now is the opportunity to do it if the American people rise up and hold our elected officials accountable.”

Florida Senator Marco Rubio also opposes the law.

“It will do irreparable damage to our economy and to our country. I don’t think you can say that you are against Obamacare if you vote for a budget that funds it.”

Republicans hold a majority in the House of Representatives. The House has repeatedly voted to cancel funding for the health care law. But the effort has been blocked in the Senate, which the Democratic Party controls. And, President Obama would veto any such effort.

The president recently spoke to reporters about calls to close down the government.

“The idea that you would shut down the government unless you prevent 30-million people from getting health care is a bad idea.”

Congressional Democrats are fighting the idea of defunding the law. House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi is sharply critical of some Congressional Republicans.

“I think they’re aimless. I think they’re chaotic, and I think they are making matters worse for the American people when we should be resolving this.”

A number of Republicans in both the House and Senate also oppose the effort to block financing for the health care law. The issue has even become a point of division within the party. But House Speaker John Boehner believes the issue can and will be settled.

“And I am confident that when we get into the fall, we’ll find it may be a messy process, but I suspect we’ll find a way to get there.”

David Hawkings writes for Roll Call, a newspaper that reports on congress. He believes that Ted Party activists are leading the campaign to defund the law.

“Conservative Republicans, the Tea Party Republicans have been itching for a fight ever since they got here in 2011. There are still a solid number of Republicans in the House, especially, who are itching for that kind of a confrontation and think they’ll win it.”

Ford O'Connell has served as an advisor to the Republican Party. He is among those warning members not to act on the threat.

“It is a very, very risky strategy that could come back and bite the Republicans at a very important time when they're trying to change their identity and change their perception and win in 2014, so they can grow their numbers and govern in Congress.”

In the 1990s, Republicans were involved in budget battles with then President Bill Clinton. Those disputes led federal agencies to suspend operations. Now long-time Republicans worry that since the party was blamed for those shut downs, it will be again if the government closes over the health care law. I'm Mario Ritter.

You are listening to As It Is from VOA Learning English. I'm Caty Weaver.

In recent days, President Obama has increasingly turned his attention to the conflict in Syria and foreign relations. Mr. Obama left Washington Tuesday night for a three-day visit to Sweden and Russia. On Wednesday the president was in Sweden.

The United States and Sweden have had a special relationship for many years. The two sides on Wednesday reconfirmed their cooperation on shared economic, environmental, and security issues.

President Obama and Swedish Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt met in Stockholm. The two men talked about a number of issues, including trade and investment, climate change and disarmament.

In a joint statement, they agreed that the close relationship comes from shared values such as democracy, the respect for human rights, and the rule of law. The statement said, for example, that the two sides would continue to protect the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons around the world.

Each side promised financial support for the Global Equality Fund. The United States launched the fund two years ago to assist civil society organizations in more than 20 countries.

The Obama administration says the United States and Sweden each plan to provide six million dollars in new resources for the program over three years.

The two nations re-stated their goal of seeking a world without nuclear weapons. The leaders also spoke about the situation in Syria. They strongly condemned any and all use of chemical weapons.

It was the first time in history that an American president has visited Sweden while in office. Over four million Americans claim to have Swedish ancestors.

This year marks the 375th anniversary of the establishment of the first Swedish settlement in what is now the United States. It has been 230 years since the signing of the first free trade agreement between the nations.

And that's AS IT IS for today. I'm Caty Weaver.



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