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Houston women march for solidarity for second year



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Make Today Different

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Government shuts down as Trump feuds with Democrats



U.S. Capitol is seen shortly after beginning of the Government shutdown
USA-CONGRESS/SHUTDOWN

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The second year of Donald Trump's presidency began on Saturday with the U.S. government in shutdown mode while lawmakers gathered in hopes of finding a compromise that would fund federal agencies. For the first time since October 2013 - when a similar standoff that lasted 16 days kept only essential agency operations running - federal workers were being told to stay at home or in some cases to work without pay until new funding is approved. Facing a political crisis that could have an impact on November's congressional elections, the Republican-controlled Senate and House of Representatives were holding rare weekend sessions on Saturday. But House Republicans, who gathered for closed meeting before their open session, were taking a hard line against Democrats, which could point to the possibility of a prolonged standoff.

The government had been running on three consecutive temporary funding bills since the new fiscal year began in October. One senior House Republican, Greg Walden, told reporters the government would have to be reopened before discussions could advance on immigration - a main sticking point that led to the impasse.

Democrats' demand of securing permanent legal protections for 700,000 young, undocumented immigrants as a condition for new government funding, Walden said, was "hostage taking in its worse form." Democrats counter that they have been pleading with Republicans for months to approve the immigration measure as a stand-alone bill and were rebuffed. One idea being floated by Republicans was to renew government funding through Feb. 8 to end the shutdown, while working to resolve other issues, ranging from immigration, military and non-military spending levels, disaster relief and some healthcare issues.

The partial government shutdown was triggered at midnight on Friday when the Senate failed to agree to a House-passed bill to fund the government through Feb. 16. It lacked immigration measures that Democrats insisted upon and also drew some Republican opposition.

Despite tough words from some House Republicans, others were providing conflicting messages. Marc Short, the White House legislative affairs director, told reporters on Capitol Hill: "We are anxious to get a resolution on DACA."

He was referring to the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program that former President Barack Obama created and Trump ended in September. It was providing protection from deportation for the illegal immigrants brought to the United States as children and now known as "Dreamers."

Moderate Republican Representative Charlie Dent predicted the government shutdown will end only when bipartisan legislation is allowed to advance in Congress, even if it angers conservatives. "That's the price of leadership," he said. The shutdown began a year to the day after Trump was sworn in as president. His inability to cut a deal despite having a Republican majority in both houses of Congress marks arguably the most debilitating setback for his administration. Twitter posts early on Saturday, Trump blamed Democratic lawmakers. "This is the One Year Anniversary of my Presidency and the Democrats wanted to give me a nice present," he said. "Democrats are far more concerned with illegal immigrants than they are with our great military or safety at our dangerous southern border," he said. "They could have easily made a deal but decided to play shutdown politics instead."

Trump said the shutdown showed the need to win more Republican seats in 2018 mid-term elections.

"We can then be even tougher on Crime (and Border), and even better to our Military & Veterans!" he said.

House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi laid blame on Republicans in a floor speech on Saturday.

"Despite controlling the House, the Senate and the White House the Republicans were so incompetent, so negligent that they couldn't get it together to keep government open," Pelosi said.

There had been modest hope on Friday when Democratic Senate Leader Chuck Schumer went to the White House to talk with Trump. One person familiar with the events said the two men agreed to seek a grand deal in which Democrats would win protections from deportation for some 700,000 young undocumented immigrants known as "Dreamers" and Trump would get more money for a border wall and tighter security to stem illegal immigration from Mexico.

Despite frantic meetings that ran through midnight, a deal could not be reached. In a statement issued minutes before Friday's midnight deadline for a funding deal, Trump's White House said: "We will not negotiate the status of unlawful immigrants while Democrats hold our lawful citizens hostage over their reckless demands."

The reference to "unlawful immigrants" was in stark contrast to earlier statements, including one in September in which Trump proclaimed, "We love the Dreamers."

Democrats and many Republicans want to provide permanent legal status leading to citizenship for Dreamers.

Evans-Shabazz named chair of HCC Board of Trustees



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HOUSTON [Jan. 19, 2018] - Dr. Carolyn Evans-Shabazz is the new chair of the Houston Community College Board of Trustees. The trustees elected Dr. Evans-Shabazz, who represents District IV, at the January 18 board meeting.

"I fully support Chancellor Cesar Maldonado and the HCC administration as they continue to transform the college into a model institution," Evans-Shabazz said.

Dr. Evans-Shabazz, a board member since 2015, is a former teacher and currently a real estate professional.

The board also named Pretta VanDible Stallworth as vice-chair. Elected to the board to represent District IX in December 2017, VanDible Stallworth was named to the post by fellow trustees on the same day of her ceremonial swearing-in. She previously served on the board from 1989 to 1993 and is an educator and business consultant.

Trustee Zeph Capo was elected board secretary. Capo has represented District I on the board since his election in 2013 and is the vice president and legislative director for the Houston Federation of Teachers.

Also at the January -18 board meeting, the board passed a "Resolution of Unity and Support" by a vote of 8-0, resolving to work together in a

professional and collegial manner and disavowing trustee actions that circumvent the college's policies and procedures, cause unnecessary distraction, or do not support the college's mission. The resolution also recognized achievements under Dr. Maldonado's leadership, including

- Increasing the annual awards of certificates and degrees by 22%
- Increasing dual-credit student enrollment by 35%
- Establishing 14 Workforce Centers of Excellence
- Establishing the historic partnership with Apple and the launching of the iCDS (Coding and Design School)
- Retiring more than \$19 million in bonded indebtedness and removing the negative watch by rating agencies

Finally, the board approved a proposal to hire a consultant to work with the college to develop a long-term strategic plan.

"I am grateful for the support of my colleagues and pleased that they joined me in voting for the resolution of unity and support," said Evans-Shabazz. "The college has made tremendous strides under Chancellor Maldonado's leadership and I am excited to begin long-term strategic planning as we chart a course for the college's future."

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Supreme Court Agrees To Consider Internet Sales Taxes

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court agreed Friday to decide if states should be able to collect taxes on internet sales, which would generate billions in revenue for local governments, but also raise the cost of online shopping for consumers.

Just over a quarter-century ago, the court ruled that a state could not force mail order catalog companies to collect sales taxes unless they had a physical presence in the state. Led by South Dakota, 36 states want the court to take another look at the issue, arguing that the 1992 decision was issued "before Amazon was even selling books out of Jeff Bezos's garage."

Part of the court's logic was that it would be too difficult for mail order companies to compute the widely varying tax rates among, and even within, the 50 states.

But lawyers for South Dakota said that's no longer an issue in the digital age. "Advances in computing have made it easy for retailers to collect different states' sales taxes," they wrote in a court brief.

Internet companies "can instantly tailor their marketing and overnight delivery of hundreds of thousands of products to individual customers based on their IP addresses. These companies can surely calculate sales tax from a zip code," the state said.



U.S. Supreme Court Building in Washington, D.C

The states also said the current ban on internet sales taxes puts brick-and-mortar retailers, who have to collect sales taxes, at a disadvantage. Congress has considered a plan to allow states to collect taxes on purchases made by their residents through out-of-state companies, but no legislation has passed.

Lawyers for the states said they're losing nearly \$34 billion a year because of the physical presence rule, though estimates from the federal Government Accountability Office said the figure is much smaller.

The case came to the Supreme Court after South Dakota passed an Internet tax law in 2016. Hoping to launch a legal battle that would lead the Supreme Court to reconsider its 1992 decision, the state sued out-of-state Internet retailers. Bound by the earlier ruling, the South Dakota supreme court ruled against the state.

In response, the internet companies said col-



lected up to \$13 billion more in 2017 if they'd been allowed to require sales tax payments from online merchants and other remote sellers, according to a report from the Government Accountability Office, Congress's nonpartisan audit and research agency. Other estimates are even higher. All but five states impose sales taxes.

Online retailers Wayfair Inc., Overstock.com Inc. and Newegg Inc. are opposing South Dakota in the court fight. Each collects sales taxes from customers in only some states.

The case will also affect Amazon.com Inc., though the biggest online retailer isn't directly involved. When selling its own inventory, Amazon charges sales tax in every state that imposes one, but about half of its sales involve goods owned by third-party merchants. For those items, the company says it's up to the sellers to collect any taxes, and many don't.

The court probably will hear arguments in April with a ruling by the end of its nine-month term in late June.

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'Physical Presence'

The high court's 1992 Quill v. North Dakota ruling, which involved a mail-order company, said retailers can be forced to collect taxes only in states where the company has a "physical presence." The court invoked the so-called dormant commerce clause, a judge-created legal doctrine that bars states from interfering with interstate commerce unless authorized by Congress.

South Dakota passed its law in 2016 with an eye toward overturning the Quill decision. It requires retailers with more than \$100,000 in annual sales in the state to pay a 4.5 percent tax on purchases. Soon after enacting the law, the state filed suit and asked the courts to declare the measure constitutional.

"States' inability to effectively collect sales tax from internet sellers imposes crushing harm on state treasuries and brick-and-mortar retailers alike," South Dakota said in its Supreme Court appeal.

Related

U.S. Supreme Court to Review Bid to Collect Internet Sales Tax

The U.S. Supreme Court will consider freeing state and local governments to collect billions of dollars in sales taxes from online retailers, agreeing to revisit a 26-year-old ruling that has made much of the internet a tax-free zone.

Heading calls from traditional retailers and dozens of states, the justices said they'll hear South Dakota's contention that the 1992 ruling is obsolete in the e-commerce era and should be overturned. State and local governments could have col-

lected up to \$13 billion more in 2017 if they'd been allowed to require sales tax payments from online merchants and other remote sellers, according to a report from the Government Accountability Office, Congress's nonpartisan audit and research agency. Other estimates are even higher. All but five states impose sales taxes.

Expressing Doubts

"If Quill is overruled, the burdens will fall primarily on small and medium-size companies whose access to a national market will be stifled," the companies argued. "Congress can address this issue in a balanced and comprehensive manner through legislation."

Those supporting South Dakota at the high court include 35 other states, as well as lawmakers who say they've been trying for years to get Congress to address the issue. Overturning Quill would mean "leveling the playing field for businesses who are employing people on Main Street," Senator Heidi Heitkamp, a North Dakota Democrat, said in an interview. Heitkamp was North Dakota's tax commissioner during its unsuccessful fight for taxing power in the Quill case.



The National Retail Federation, which represents both brick-and-mortar and Internet-only sellers, said it was encouraged by the court's decision to get involved. "We are hopeful it will lead to a positive outcome that reflects the realities of 21st century commerce," the trade group's president, Matthew Shay, said in a statement.

Three current justices -- Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch and Anthony Kennedy -- have expressed doubts about Quill. Kennedy said in 2015 that Quill had produced a "startling revenue shortfall" in many states, as well as "unfairness" to local retailers and their customers. "A case questionable even when decided, Quill now harms states to a degree far greater than could have been anticipated earlier," Kennedy wrote. "It should be left in place only if a powerful showing can be made that its rationale is still correct."

Gorsuch, the newest Supreme Court justice, suggested skepticism about Quill as an appeals court judge. And Thomas has said he would jettison the entire dormant commerce clause, saying "it has no basis in the Constitution and has proved unworkable in practice."

Amazon backs a nationwide approach that would relieve retailers from dealing with a patchwork of state laws. Amazon once relied on the Quill ruling and didn't collect sales tax at all; the company gradually changed its position as it built warehouses all over the country, giving it a greater physical presence in multiple states. The case is South Dakota v. Wayfair, 17-494. The case is South Dakota v. Wayfair. (Courtesy <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles>)



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A Snapshot Of The World



Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) speaks during a news conference after President Donald Trump and the U.S. Congress failed to reach a deal on funding for federal



A demonstrator with a sign on their chest that reads "Enough of abuses" attends a protest rally against Bolivia's government new health care policies in La Paz



Figure Skating - ISU European Championships 2018 - Ice Dance Victory Ceremony



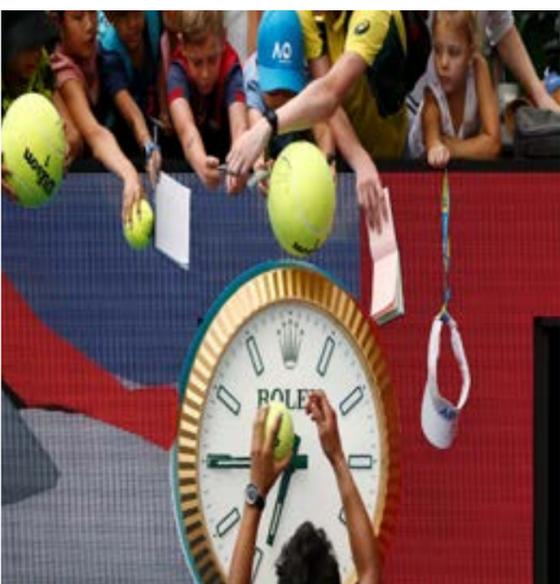
People take part in the Women's March in Manhattan in New York City



Alpine Skiing - FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup - Men's Alpine Downhill - Kitzbuehel, Austria - January 20, 2018 - Johan Clarey of France is seen crashing on a screen. REUTERS/Leonhard



An employee attaches a mask, depicting North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, to a mannequin at the "Made In North Korea" exhibition in Moscow



Tennis - Australian Open - Rod Laver Arena, Melbourne, Australia, January 20, 2018. Chung Hyeon of South Korea signs autographs after winning against Alexander Zverev of Germany.



Marcus Gruley lays in a hammock in a park adjacent the Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool during the Second Annual Women's March in Washington



Riot policeman kicks a tear gas canister to demonstrators, during a protest against the re-election of Honduras' President Juan Orlando Hernandez in Tegucigalpa

As part of a broad effort to interfere in U.S. institutions, China tries to shape the discussion at American universities, stifle criticism and influence academic activity by offering funding, often through front organizations closely linked to Beijing.

Now that aspect of Beijing's foreign influence campaign is beginning to face resistance from academics and lawmakers. A major battle in this nascent campus war played out over the past six months at the University of Texas in Austin.

After a long internal dispute, a high-level investigation and an intervention by Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.), the university last week rejected a proposal by the leader of its new China center to accept money from the China United States Exchange Foundation (CUSEF). The Hong Kong-based foundation and its leader, Tung Chee-hwa, are closely linked to the branch of the Chinese Communist Party that manages influence operations abroad.

The University of Texas debate erupted after the China Public Policy Center at the university's LBJ School of Public Affairs opened in August. Executive Director David Firestein proposed making CUSEF a principal funder of the initiative. Firestein, a former Foreign Service officer, had worked with the foundation before.



Tung Chee-hwa, former chief executive of Hong Kong, in 2004. (Photo/Givon/AP)

After several professors and university officials raised concerns about ties among CUSEF, Tung and the Communist Party, university President Gregory Fennes launched an investigation. Over several weeks, Fennes met with intelligence officials and experts to gauge the risk that accepting CUSEF money could compromise the university's academic integrity or give China undue access to and influ-

University Of Texas Rejects Chinese Communist Party-Linked Influence Efforts On Campus

Compiled And Edited By John T. Robbins, Southern Daily Editor



The University of Texas at Austin.

ence over academic products.

While the investigation was ongoing, Firestein held an event in November that was hosted by CUSEF and featured a former Chinese vice foreign minister. Shortly afterward, multiple reports highlighted that Tung is vice chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, a party organ that self-identifies as "a united front organization." The CP-PCC and the Communist Party's United Front Work Department collaborate on China's influence operations abroad.

"The party's united front activities are intended — still described in Maoist terms — to mobilize the party's friends to strike at the party's enemies," said Peter Mattis, a China fellow at the Jamestown Foundation and former U.S. intelligence analyst. "That has no place on a university campus in America."



Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Tex.)

Tung was also the first chief executive of Hong Kong after the territory returned to Beijing's control. His foundation has funded research at many leading academic institutions and think tanks, including the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies and the Brookings Institution. A CUSEF spokesman told me the foundation is not an agent of the Chinese government and is supported by private donors who believe a positive U.S.-China relationship "is essential for global

well-being." Before UT-Austin could become next on its list, Cruz weighed in. On Jan. 2, he warned Fennes in a letter that accepting CUSEF money could allow China to spread propaganda and compromise the university's credibility.

CUSEF and the United Front are the "external face" of the Communist Party's "internal authoritarianism," and giving them access to UT-Austin's education system could lead to "undue foreign influence and exploitation," Cruz wrote.

On Friday, Fennes told Cruz in a response that UT-Austin will not accept any funding from CUSEF for its China center. Before the senator's warning, the university had decided to reject "programmatic funding," Fennes wrote. After receiving the letter and inquiries from The Post, the university decided to ban all CUSEF funding.



University of Texas President Dr. Gregory Fennes

Fennes shares Cruz's concerns that accepting CUSEF money "could create potential conflicts of interest or place limits on academic freedom and the robust exchange of ideas," he wrote. A Cruz aide said Fennes had preserved the integrity of the institution through his decision.

UT-Austin's decision has implications not only for the future of Chinese money in higher education but also for the greater effort to counter Chinese interference in free societies, known as "sharp power."

"This is one of the first examples of a university turning down money because it is tied to the Chinese Communist Party's united front activities," said Mattis, adding that the university's deliberative and informed process should be a model for other institutions.

Universities still face broader challenges in dealing with China. The Chinese government has sponsored hundreds of Confucius Institutes on college campuses that operate under opaque contracts and often stand accused of interfering in China-related education activities. Increasing numbers of Chinese students in the United States have come under pressure from their government when they have spoken against the party's narrative. Some have begun challenging professors who speak critically about Beijing's policies.

Due to the growing efforts of academics, government officials, lawmakers and journalists, the thin veil protecting organizations that do the Chinese Communist Party's bidding abroad is being peeled back. But the greater struggle to expose and then counter Chinese foreign interference in free societies is just beginning. (Courtesy https://www.wsj.com/articles)

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Bank of America executive departs after misconduct investigation



NEW YORK - A senior executive at Bank of America in New York departed last week after an internal investigation into a young female banker's accusation of inappropriate sexual conduct...

Houston women march for solidarity for second year



People gather at Water Works at Buffalo Bayou, 105 Sabine St., for the Houston Women's March to City Hall in downtown Houston Saturday.

By Brooke A. Lewis and Joy Sewing

Hundreds gathered in Houston on Saturday to march for the second year in a row for women's rights. The second Women's March in Houston got underway at 9:30 a.m. with a walk from Buffalo Bayou Cistern on Allen Parkway to City Hall...

Kandice Webber, of Black Lives Matter Houston, urged women to consider the plight of minority women marching around them. 'Its time for us to start checking our privilege, it's time for us to start checking our biases,' said Webber.

allegations of sexual harassment. More than 20,000 women marched last year in Houston. As Saturday's march got underway, chants began, such as 'We want a leader, not a creepy tweeter.'

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