VOA NEWS

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This is VOA news. I'm David Byrd in Washington.

As a potential government shutdown is just hours away, President Donald Trump and Democrats are trading preemptive blame.

Just minutes ago, leaders in the U.S. Senate announced that they would not be voting on any more legislation until a spending agreement is reached.

As AP's Sagar Meghani reports, there was no timeline given.

President Trump and Democrats appeared dug in over legislation that would avoid a shutdown at midnight.

The standoff centers on the president's demand for billions in border wall funding, which the House put into a bill and passed yesterday.

The president says the Senate now has to follow though the bill has little chance of passing.

"It's really the Democrat shutdown because we've done our thing."

But he'd already said last week he would proudly shut down the government over border security and Senate Democratic chief Chuck Schumer says this is really the Trump shutdown.

"You said so in your own words."

Hundreds of thousands of federal workers will be furloughed or forced to work without pay if there is no deal to keep the government open.

Sagar Meghani, Washington.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Supreme Court Friday refused to allow the Trump administration to implement new rules prohibiting asylum for people who enter the United States illegally.

As AP's Ben Thomas reports, the vote was five to four, with conservative Chief Justice John Roberts voting with the liberals

The court's order leaves in place lower court rulings that blocked President Trump's proclamation automatically denying asylum to people who enter the country from Mexico without going through official border crossings.

The ban is now on hold pending the outcome of a lawsuit challenging it. That case could take months to resolve.

AP's Ben Thomas.

The budget turmoil in Washington sent markets lower, with all three major indices on Wall Street closing in negative territory. The Dow Jones Industrials were down nearly 2 percent.

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[Pope Francis], rather, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg at 85, the oldest justice on the court, had surgery Friday to remove cancerous growths in one of her lungs.

AP's Ed Donahue has details.

The Supreme Court says Doctors at New York's Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center found "no evidence of any remaining disease." The growths were in Ginsburg's left lung. Also scans taken before the surgery showed no cancerous growths elsewhere in her body.

Ruth Bader Ginsburg is 85. This is the third time she has been treated for cancer since joining the high court in 1993.

The growths were found during tests Ginsburg had after she fractured ribs in a fall in her Supreme Court office last month.

The justice is expected to stay in the hospital for a few days and there are no plans for additional treatment.

Ed Donahue, Washington.

Pope Francis called Friday on those who have sexually abused children to turn themselves in.

We get the details from Sabina Castelfranco in Rome.

Pope Francis said the Church has for some time been firmly committed to eliminating the evil of abuse. But in his annual speech to the Curia, ahead of Christmas, he acknowledged there remain consecrated men who continue to "abuse the vulnerable, taking advantage of their position and their power of persuasion."

The pope added that these men "perform abominable acts yet continue to exercise their ministry as if nothing had happened. They have no fear of God or his judgement," he said, "but only of being found out and unmasked."

Francis has come under fire for his handling of a sex abuse scandal in the Chilean Church and acknowledged he made "grave errors" in judgment in that case.

Sabina Castelfranco, for VOA news, Rome.

The U.S. economy expanded again in the third quarter slightly less than previous expectations.

AP's Mike Hempen reports economists are expecting the economy to finish the year very strong.

The downward revision from 3.5 to 3.4 percent was due to an even bigger decline in exports of a category that includes industrial machinery as well as slower consumer spending on non-durable goods, such as gasoline and other energy products.

Over all, consumer spending still grew at a solid annual rate of 3.5 percent.

Mike Hempen of AP.

The U.N. Security Council has unanimously endorsed a deal for a cease-fire around the vital Yemeni port of Hodeida.

The U.N. will monitor the cease-fire and is authorized by the resolution to deploy an advance team for that purpose for an initial period of 30 days.

The resolution "insists" that all parties respect the cease-fire agreed for Hodeida, a key port for the import of the majority of Yemen's food, medicine and relief supplies.

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