

Clinton Blames GOP for Costly Federal Shutdowns

President Implores Congress to Pass Continuing Resolution By Friday to Avoid Third Closure

Reuter

President Clinton yesterday blamed Republican congressional leaders for the breakdown in budget talks and for costing taxpayers \$1.5 billion by twice shutting down the federal government.

"That's not Monopoly money. Shutting down the government again would be unbelievably irresponsible," he said in his weekly radio address.

Congress must pass another continuing resolution to fund the gov-

ernment by midnight Friday or some parts of the government might be shut down again, for the third time in three months.

"The government shutdowns so far have cost taxpayers about a billion-and-a-half dollars . . . so, again I say to the Republicans, don't do that," Clinton said. "We can't afford to bleed money and productivity when we should be putting all our efforts into saving money, serving the American people, strengthening our economy and moving forward."

In the Republican response, Rep. Bill Paxon (R-N.Y.) blamed Clinton for refusing to make "the tough choices."

"In the spirit of bipartisanship, we have modified our budget several times to win the president's support. In fact, we have moved \$402 billion toward President Clinton while he's moved just \$48 billion in our direction," he said.

Paxon called the White House budget plan "a quick fix" that postponed unpopular decisions until well after November's presidential election.

"The American people deserve honest solutions, not promises that solutions will be coming some day," he said.

Clinton and congressional Republicans have been trying to agree on how to balance the federal budget by the year 2002. Talks had been scheduled this week, but Republicans demanded that the president first offer a new plan.

"The budget talks are suspended now because the Republican congressional leaders walked away from the table," Clinton said. "I wish they hadn't done that, and I hope they'll come back."

The president maintained that he

had "gone the extra mile" in the talks, giving Republicans the seven-year plan they had asked for and promising to use figures from the Congressional Budget Office.

He denounced what he called the drastic cutbacks in government services that would result if the Republican budget became law but said that both sides had presented all the elements of a balanced spending plan.

"We don't agree on everything, but we agree on a lot. And we agree on more than enough to balance the budget, so let's do it," Clinton said.

He urged Republicans to "do the right thing" to come back to the bargaining table and not to close the government down.

But House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), on a cross-country tour to raise funds for Republicans, has sounded a consistently pessimistic note.

"I truly believe there will not be an agreement on the budget," Gingrich predicted Friday during an appearance in Memphis. "The Clinton liberals want to hold onto their big government programs."