



BLOCK

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House would vote on the measure Tuesday. It is sure to pass, and the GOP-run Senate may adopt it as well. Trump quickly promised a veto.

“Will I veto it? 100 percent,” Trump told reporters at the White House.

Any Trump veto would likely be sustained, but the upcoming battle will test Republican support for the president’s move, which even some of his allies view as a stretch — and a slap at lawmakers’ control over the power of the federal purse.

A staff aide introduced the measure during a short pro forma House session in which Rep. Don Beyer, D-Va., presided over an almost-empty chamber.

“What the president is attempting is an unconstitutional power grab,” said Rep. Joaquin Castro, D-Texas, the sponsor of the resolution, on a call with reporters. “There is no emergency at the border.”

Trump’s declaration of a national emergency gives him access to about \$3.6 billion in funding for military construction projects to divert to border fencing. But the administration is more likely to tap funding from a federal asset forfeiture fund and Defense Department anti-drug efforts first.

Trump’s edict is also being challenged in the federal courts, where a host of Democratic-led states such as California are among those that have sued to overturn Trump’s order. The House may also join in.

Pelosi said the House measure would “reassert our system of checks and balances.”

For Democrats, the vote is another chance to challenge Trump over funding for a border wall, the issue that was central to the 35-day government shutdown. It also puts some Republicans from swing districts and states in a difficult spot, as many have expressed misgivings about Trump’s action despite their support for his border security agenda.

Should the House and the Senate initially approve the measure, Congress seems unlikely to muster the two-thirds majorities in each chamber that would be needed later to override a Trump veto.

The measure to block Trump’s edict will be closely watched in the Senate, where moderates such as Susan Collins, R-Maine, and Lamar Alexander, R-Tenn., have signaled they would back it. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is only a reluctant supporter of Trump on the topic.

Trump’s GOP allies promised they would uphold any veto denying Democrats the two-thirds votes required to overcome one.

“Democrats’ angst over Congress’ power of the purse is unwarranted, especially since the commander in chief’s authority to redirect military funds for a national emergency is affirmed in a law passed by their own branch,” said top House Judiciary Committee Republican Doug Collins of Georgia.

Mulching can help protect plants’ roots from heat, cold, drought

BY JOSEPH MASABNI
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Mulching is a long-established horticultural practice that involves spreading a layer of material on the ground around plants to protect their roots from heat, cold, or drought or to keep the fruit clean.

Mulches can be classified as inorganic or organic:

- Inorganic mulches include plastic, rocks, rock chips, and other nonplant materials. Plastic is the only inorganic mulch used in vegetable gardens.

- Organic mulches include straw, compost, newspaper, sawdust, and similar materials.

Shallow cultivation of the soil’s surface after a rain slows the rate of water loss from the soil.

A 4-inch layer of mulch on the soil surface, especially in sloping gardens, helps keep water from washing away soil particles. Mulches also prevent raindrops from splashing on the soil surface

and reduce the spread of diseases.

The use of mulch is vital in Texas. A mulch layer on the soil surface allows the soil to soak up more water. It also reduces the rate of water loss from the soil. A 4-inch layer of mulch on the soil surface dries much faster than the soil below it. Thus, it prevents water from moving into the air.

Mulches modify the soil temperature in home gardens. Applied in late fall, winter mulch insulates the roots, crowns, and stems of winter crops from extremely low temperatures.

In the summer, proper mulching helps keep the soil cooler.

Conversely, soil covered by black or clear plastic or dark organic mulch in early spring warms faster than bare soil. This allows earlier planting of warm-season crops. To keep the soil cooler in summer, use light-colored paper such as newspaper. Organic mulches such as compost and sawdust also keep soil under the mulch layer cooler in summer.

Dark soil warms much faster than does light-colored soil.

Organic mulches enrich the soil as they decay and improve the environment for plant growth. Soils high in organic matter are easier to till and better suited to vegetable gardening. Adding organic material makes the soil more crumbly, especially clay soils that pack and crust.

Mulches also help plants by gradually making the soil more fertile. At the end of the season, organic mulch such as straw or newspaper can be turned under the soil. This helps build the soil organic matter content. Turn under the mulch as soon as the gardening season is over to enable it to break down before the garden is replanted. Most types of mulch also help control weeds. Although mulch does not prevent weed seeds from sprouting, it does block the emergence of weed seedlings if the mulch layer is thick enough to exclude light. A 4-inch layer of mulch on the soil surface keeps most annual weed seedlings from coming through.

HOUSING

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Mold was one of the main concerns, with some stating they and their family members had to be hospitalized because of it.

“My three kids and myself have been sick ever since we moved into this house,” said Megan Alyss Mannino on the Facebook thread of the live video broadcast. “I love my setup, but breathing is so hard. We go to an asthma and allergy (doctor two) times a week for everyone and nothing is helping. I’ve found mold in bedrooms, but no one has ever come out to take care of it. I’ve asked for my carpet to be removed and I have to jump through so many hoops to (just) figure out how to legally remove it.”

More than 20,000 soldiers, spouses and children live in post housing, not counting soldiers who live in the barracks.

Maintenance response times was another big concern, with some saying it was taking weeks or months to get a response to their maintenance requests. One person even said their issue would not be taken care of because it would cost too much money to fix.

“Who do we call when maintenance flat out tells us they won’t fix a hot water pipe in the wall for laundry because it would require them taking the whole wall out and that would ‘cost too much money,’ so we cannot and have not been able to use the hot water to sanitize clothes for almost a year?” asked Anna Marie Dubose on the Facebook thread. “Or, how about a (hole) on the roof that was leaking water directly into the breaker box for over two years before the (hole) was finally fixed but the wood is molded out and the breaker box was never repaired or changed out?”

Fort Hood Family Housing is owned by Australian firm Lend Lease and is responsible for more than 5,500 homes on the installation. Mack Quinney, project director for Fort Hood Family Housing,



FILE PHOTO

A town hall-style community engagement on Fort Hood family housing Thursday brought to light many concerns with mold in on-post housing used by soldiers and their families.

briefed during the town hall the number of maintenance requests they receive annually.

According to Quinney, post housing receives more than 5,000 emergency maintenance requests a year, which includes air conditioning or heaters not working in extreme temperatures and water leaks.

Maintenance is required to respond to these within half an hour and fix issues within 24 hours. Urgent requests, such as a stove or toilet not working, account for more than 15,000 annual requests and must be responded to within 24 hours and completed within two days. Housing receives more than 47,000 calls for routine maintenance, which they are required to respond to within three days and complete within five.

Those times were not always followed, however, according to one attendee who did not give her name during the town hall. She described a leaking window which fell into the emergency category which took two weeks to have anyone

from maintenance even show up to look at.

In the Facebook thread, Brittany Hacker commented that her “sink won’t turn off and I called earlier this week and a plumber can’t come out until March 4.”

The town hall came about after Secretary of the Army Mark T. Esper ordered a full investigation into civilian owned and operated post housing at all Army installations following a U.S. Senate committee hearing about the general dissatisfaction of military communities Feb. 14.

“We are deeply troubled by the recent reports highlighting the deficient conditions in some of our family housing,” Esper said. “It is unacceptable for our families who sacrifice so much to have to endure these hardships in their own homes. Our most sacred obligation as Army leaders is to take care of our people — our soldiers and our family members.”

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OLSON

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notified the city of his resignation, and that his last day is March 15. City Engineer Danielle Singh has been named interim public works director.

Olson could not be immediately reached for comment.

Olson originally joined the city in January 2016 as a transportation director with past experience as a project manager and a licensed engineer with experience working in Central Texas.

When he was hired, the city said Olson is a licensed professional engineer and certified floodplain manager who previously worked as a project manager for Halff Associates. At the time, he had nine years of engineering experience including project management, engineering department management and project engineering, and graduated from Texas A&M University.

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WCID

FROM PAGE A1

search the matter. His assistant Elizabeth Coleman said Friday afternoon, he was researching it and would call. He hadn't by 7 p.m. Friday.

The proposed bill was drafted by the Texas Legislative Council — a nonpartisan legislative agency that helps lawmakers draft and analyze proposed legislation.

Shine, a Temple Republican, said the drafted version of the bill did not entirely capture the bill correctly.

"I'm sure we will probably need a substitute," he said, referring to the practice of a complete, new bill recommended by a committee instead of the original measure.

"They indicated they needed to get it out, and said whatever needed to be corrected, we would correct it with a substitute."

If this bill becomes law, the boundaries of WCID No. 1 will expand to cover the seven entities to which it sells water. The cities of Belton, Killeen, Nolanville, Harker Heights, Copperas Cove as well as Fort Hood and the 439 Water Supply Corp. near Belton purchase water from the district.

Shine's measure would require every current WCID No. 1 board member to run again in November 2020. The new board will have seven elected members, serving staggered terms.

The new board would be composed of three members from Killeen and four single-member districts, representing an equal number of voters from the areas outside the Killeen city limits.

The district boundaries and board elections currently are limited to just a small portion of Killeen.

Herald staff contributed to this report.

Tips on harvesting, handling garden vegetables

BY JOSEPH MASABNI
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

To help ensure that the vegetables you grow and prepare are of high quality, you need to harvest them at peak maturity, handle them properly, and store them under optimum conditions.

Vegetables continue their life processes even after they are picked. If the vegetables are mature at harvest, their life processes need to be slowed by chilling. If they are immature produce such as green tomatoes, store them at room temperature to enhance the ripening process.

Except for ripening, storage does not improve a vegetable's quality. To be acceptable, a vegetable must be cultivated

properly and of good quality at harvest.

It can be difficult to determine when vegetables reach peak quality. The first step is to keep a record of the cultivars planted and the dates they were planted.

Although some vegetables are more prone to damage during harvesting than others, avoid bruises and cuts in handling all produce. Discard any vegetables with signs of decay or rot to prevent them from affecting the good produce. Some vegetables should be washed in cold running water immediately after they are harvested to remove any soil, dust, or other contaminants and to help lower their temperature.

Three keys to protecting the quality of your produce after harvest are tem-

perature, moisture, and ventilation.

Temperature: For produce such as peas and sweet corn, the conversion of sugar to starch is critical to interrupt at harvest. To minimize this conversion, the produce must be cooled immediately. If possible, harvest these vegetables early in the morning or right before you intend to use them.

Moisture: The proper humidity level for storage varies by commodity. Leafy-type vegetables require a high humidity of about 95 percent; in contrast, onions can be stored in drier conditions, such as 65 to 70 percent relative humidity.

Ventilation: Minimize wilting and tissue breakdown by ensuring that air can circulate properly.

Spotting insect problems and planning to control them in your garden

BY JOSEPH MASABNI AND PATRICK LILLARD
TEXAS A&M AGRILIFE EXTENSION

Many kinds of insects feed on garden plants. Insect pests damage plants in two ways. Some chew holes in the leaves, stems, roots or fruit, and some stick their beaks into the plants and suck out plant juices.

Insects attack garden plants at all times of the year. Some insects will feed on sprouting seed and young seedlings. Others feed on the growing plant or on the mature plant and its fruit.

The insects that feed on garden plants can be divided into two main groups: the sucking and the chewing insects.

A good gardener must learn to recognize insect problems. To know when insects are damaging your plants, watch for anything that does not look normal.

The following symptoms will help you recognize insect problems.

- Plants are stunted and do not grow

properly.

- Plants have deformed or damaged leaves.
- Plants look yellow or light in color.
- Plants look wilted and droopy. If your plants show any of these symptoms, examine each plant closely for insects. Also examine the soil near the plant base, as many insects drop and hide there when disturbed.

Many insects can be managed without using pesticides, but this cultural control requires extra time and effort. It may also result in slight damage to your plants. Some of the cultural methods you can use to prevent or control insect damage are:

- Keep weeds and grass pulled out of the garden. Mow the area around the garden.
- Plant varieties that grow well in your area.
- Apply the correct amount of fertilizer and water when needed.

When you have picked all the fruit, destroy the old plants by removing them or plowing them under:

- You can wash off some insects, such as aphids and spider mites, with a water hose.
- You may hand-pick some insects or egg masses from the plant to prevent damage.

Chemical control of insects often may be necessary. For best results, treat insects before large numbers build up in the garden. Dusts or sprays provide good control.

Before you buy a pesticide, read the label to see if it is recommended for the pest and plants you want to treat. Before you use a pesticide, read the label to see how much you should use. Read all information on the label and follow all directions.

All insecticides are poisonous, so handle them with care and keep them away from children and pets.

BARR

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Although Barr carefully weighs difficult decisions and consults others before making them, once he's made them, "he doesn't kind of circle and fret," Flanagan said.

Key decisions are expected soon as Mueller shows signs of concluding his investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and possible coordination with the Trump campaign.

Mueller is required to produce a confidential report to Barr that explains his decisions to pursue or decline prosecutions. That could be as simple as a bullet point list or as fulsome as a report running hundreds of pages. Barr will then have to decide how much of Mueller's findings should be disclosed to the public.

At his confirmation hearing last month, Barr was noncommittal about what he would do, though he said repeat-

edly that he supported making as much public as possible, "consistent with the law." He said in his congressional testimony that he will write his own report summarizing Mueller's findings for Congress and the public.

"I can assure you that, where judgments are to be made by me, I will make those judgments based solely on the law and will let no personal, political or other improper interests influ-

ence my decisions," he said.

Barr has noted that department protocol says internal memos explaining charging decisions should not be released. The attorney general is required only to say the investigation has concluded and describe or explain any times when he or Rosenstein decided an action Mueller proposed "was so inappropriate or unwarranted" that it should not be pursued.

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