

# [***Top Senate Republican says border security package could rise above $14 billion as key sticking points remain***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B5F-YDS1-JBSS-S01B-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

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**Body**

Senate GOP Whip John Thune said on Monday that the price tag for the border security provisions in a national security package that negotiators are working to finalize could rise above the $14 billion President Joe Biden [*initially requested*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/20/politics/biden-administration-israel-ukraine-congress-funding/index.html) for border security.

"That's being discussed," Thune acknowledged to reporters when asked if he thought the number was going to have to go up as negotiators search for policy solutions to the complex problems at the border.

Key issues remain outstanding in the effort to strike a deal on border policy that would unlock support to pass aid for Ukraine and Israel in the Senate. It is not yet clear when an agreement might be finalized or when the Senate would be able to hold a vote. Any potential deal already faces long odds in the Republican-controlled House and the cost of the package could add to the challenge of striking an agreement and pushing for its passage.

Border negotiators continued talking throughout the weekend and making progress with most areas of policy agreed to at this point, two sources familiar with the talks told CNN. However, negotiations over border security now hinge on how to appropriate the money, an area rife with major sticking points and political battle lines.

Republican Sen. James Lankford of Oklahoma, one of the top Senate negotiators working to strike a deal on an immigration policy and foreign aid package, warned on Monday that it would be "quite a push" to begin voting on legislation this week.

"It's not going to be ready today, to be able to go out," Lankford said. "Everybody's got to have several days to be able to go through it ... it would be quite a push to be able to get it out this week."

The Oklahoma Republican said that one major hurdle at this point is figuring out how to pay for the policies they are writing.

"That's the biggest issue, is trying to be able to work through all the different pieces, how they cost and then how they function," he said.

The race to reach an agreement comes as negotiators are facing a series of challenges: diminishing support for aid to Ukraine in the Republican Party, calls from some on the left to attach conditions on Israel aid and a warning from GOP presidential frontrunner Donald Trump not to agree to anything unless it's everything Republicans are looking for on the border.

Even if a deal is finalized, House Republicans have already warned they would be prepared to reject a compromise measure they deem inadequate.

Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut, another top Senate negotiator on the immigration and foreign aid package, told reporters the next major hurdle is figuring out how to pay for the legislation without making too many changes to the bill.

"Our work is largely done. We just need the appropriators to help us fund it rather than rewrite it," he told reporters.

"We don't have a deal until we have final text, until we have agreement from the appropriators to fund it, to fund the agreement," Murphy said.

Murphy told reporters that "it's possible" they will put the bill on the floor this week. "I'm saying it's possible. I don't know whether that will happen, but it's possible," he said.

Thune noted that negotiators still have more work to do to finish text and warned that he's "not real" optimistic a vote on the package will happen this week.

"There isn't text yet. We gotta have text. Our members are gonna need time to review it so we'll see," he said.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell had said last week that he hoped they could begin voting on a package this week.

On Monday, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer said while negotiators are getting ever closer, "there are a handful of issues that have not yet been agreed to" and it's "not a done deal yet."

"If presented with the opportunity to pass a national security supplemental here on the floor, we intend to act as quickly as possible. We're not there yet. We'll keep going," he said. "We remain hopeful, but it's certainly not a done deal yet."

As the 2024 White House race increasingly looms large over the political landscape, lawmakers have had to contend with presidential ***politics*** as negotiations over a border package continue, a factor that threatens to make the effort even more fraught as Trump has openly criticized the idea of any compromise. "I do not think we should do a Border Deal, at all, unless we get EVERYTHING needed to shut down the INVASION of Millions and Millions of people," he wrote on Truth Social last Wednesday.

Pressed on Trump's position and how that could affect support for their final product, Lankford replied, "I don't have any doubt he is supportive of trying to be able to secure the border. Where he is on this particular package, I don't know, but there's no question that he's supportive of trying to secure the border and this is going to have a lot of new tools for any administration to be more effective at actually securing the border."

Lankford noted that he has not spoken directly with the former president about the negotiations. "There may be a time for that," he acknowledged.

Immigration policy is a notoriously difficult political issue, a major reason why efforts at compromise have failed in the past.

Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin was skeptical on Monday about proposals to alter the president's ability to grant parole to immigrants, something that is a key demand of Republicans in the border security negotiations and may be a major part of their emerging deal.

"It's too important at critical moments in history for the president to have that authority," Durbin said.

Asked if he is open to changing or limiting parole or asylum," Durbin said: "I have not seen a specific proposal, but I am skeptical of any diminution of the president's power in this area."

"I don't want to prejudge it until it's done," he added.

CNN's Manu Raju and Kristin Wilson contributed to this report.

By Ted Barrett, Morgan Rimmer, Lauren Fox and Clare Foran, CNN

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