

Mnuchin says he does not expect a stimulus bill before the election.



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Published Oct. 14, 2020 Updated Oct. 15, 2020, 1:39 a.m. ET

Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Wednesday that he did not expect an economic relief package to be enacted before the Nov. 3 election, as he and Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California have continued to struggle to reach an agreement on a broad package to support the economy.

Negotiators on Wednesday resumed discussions over a coronavirus relief package, even though Democrats and Republicans remain wildly divided over the scope and size of another stimulus bill.

Speaking at a Milken Institute conference on Wednesday, Mr. Mnuchin said that his conversation with Ms. Pelosi was “comprehensive” but indicated that important differences remained. He said that it was unlikely that a deal could be reached and enacted before the election.

“At this point, getting something done before the election and executing on that will be difficult,” Mr. Mnuchin said.

Ms. Pelosi and Mr. Mnuchin spoke on Wednesday for about an hour, discussing the language of the administration’s latest \$1.8 trillion framework as compared to House Democrats’ \$2.2 trillion stimulus plan, which Ms. Pelosi pushed through the House earlier this month.

They agreed to speak again on Thursday.

“One major area of disagreement continues to be that the White House lacks an understanding of the need for a national strategic testing plan,” Drew Hammill, a spokesman for Ms. Pelosi, said on Twitter. “The Speaker believes we must reopen our economy & schools safely & soon, & scientists agree we must have a strategic testing plan.”

The Treasury secretary suggested that the gap on the top-line cost of the bill was not that wide, but that the differences on the policies within a package remained significant. He said that the White House had already made big compromises on funding for state and local governments and that Republicans continued to want liability protections for businesses that were seeking to reopen during the pandemic.

“We continue to make progress on certain issues; on certain issues we continue to be far apart,” he said.

Mr. Mnuchin criticized Democrats for insisting on a comprehensive bill and not passing smaller bills on areas where the two sides agreed. He said that people and businesses needed immediate assistance and estimated that there was \$300 billion in unused relief money that could be repurposed with congressional approval.

“Let’s not wait for the big bang and everything being perfect,” he said.

President Trump has pushed negotiators to “go big!!!” days after abruptly ending talks, but Senate Republicans remain reluctant to accept a broad sweeping bill, citing concerns about the cost of such a package after approving nearly \$3 trillion in legislation earlier this year.

Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority leader, has said he plans to have the Senate vote to advance a scaled-back bill that would amount to a fraction of the \$2.2 trillion Ms. Pelosi has demanded, but that is unlikely to pass without the Democratic support needed to clear the 60-vote threshold.