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Rep. Louie Gohmert, R-Texas, escorts a group of constituents through the Capitol Rotunda during a lull in activity in the House of Representatives on Monday in Washington. The government partially shut down last week amid Washington gridlock and faces a make-or-break deadline later this month about the nation's borrowing power.

No end in sight?

Debt limit overtaking shutdown as US crisis focus

BY DAVID ESPO
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — A possible national default loomed closer on Monday as the partial government shutdown lingered, rattling markets in the U.S. and overseas. A gridlocked Congress betrayed little or no urgency toward resolving either of the threats.

Stocks got a case of the jitters on Wall Street, and halfway around the world China stressed the importance for the international economy of raising the U.S. debt limit.

"Safeguarding the debt is of vital importance to the economy of the U.S. and the world," Vice Finance Minister Zhu Guangyao said, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. China holds $1.277 trillion in U.S. Treasury bonds, second only to Japan.

At home, the political rhetoric was unchanged — and generally uncompromising — while a new poll suggested Republicans are paying a heavier price than Democrats for the deadlock.

President Barack Obama said the House should vote immediately on ending the partial closure of the federal establishment. He accused House Speaker John Boehner of refusing to permit the necessary legislation to come to the floor because he "doesn't apparently want to see the ... shutdown end at the moment, unless he's able to extract concessions that don't have anything to do with the budget."

Boehner, in rebuttal, called on Obama to agree to negotiations on changes in the nation's health care overhaul and steps to curb deficits, the principal GOP demands for ending the shutdown and eliminating the threat of default.

"Really, Mr. President. It's time to have that conversation before our economy is put further at risk," the Ohio Republican said in remarks on the House floor.

Obama said he would talk with the Republicans on those topics or virtually any others. But the White House has said repeatedly the president will not negotiate until the government is fully re-opened and the debt limit has been raised to stave off the nation's first-ever default.