

Maine lawmakers adjourned on Thursday without approving a transportation bond in a departure from recent practice.

By [Michael Shepherd](#), BDN Staff | 6.20.2019 | [Complete article can be viewed here:](#)

The Maine Legislature pulled an all-nighter on Wednesday and adjourned for 2019 early Thursday while leaving major items unresolved, including a bond package floated by Gov. Janet Mills that Democrats and Republicans couldn't agree on.

Lawmakers could return for a special session to handle that and other unfinished business, but the impasse on a bond package creates major uncertainty for the Maine Department of Transportation, which could lose out on \$100 million in borrowing that it counts on for annual work plans for improving roads, bridges and other infrastructure.

Maine lawmakers may not approve any bonds for the 2019 ballot, which would be a stark break from past practice. Mills proposed a [four-part bond package](#) earlier this month worth \$239 million, centering it on transportation, conservation and economic and workforce development. Voters would have seen most of it in November. That last part — which earmarked \$30 million of \$50 million for broadband expansion — would have gone to the 2020 ballot.

It immediately ran into trouble. While the four items would have been voted on separately by Mainers, the Democratic governor packaged them together for an easier path to legislative approval and that rankled Republicans who wanted to vote on them separately.

All of that happened because the minority party can withhold the two-thirds votes in both chambers required to send bonds to the ballot. As the vote approached, Republicans signaled they wouldn't go along with the four-part package. Democrats refused to split it into parts.

They didn't resolve that by the time Mills' package went up for votes around 4:30 a.m. on Thursday. Republicans [withheld the necessary votes](#), then House Democrats [spiked a Republican amendment](#) that would have issued the transportation bond only.

On the House floor, Rep. Patrick Corey, R-Windham, a key backer of a \$30 million conservation bond that made it into Mills' package, urged members to vote against it, saying that "lumping it into a package that exceeds \$200 million" made it "unsupportable."

Maine has [borrowed for four straight years](#) to improve roads, bridges and other infrastructure and those measures are widely supported by politicians and voters. Legislative leaders could come back for a special session in 2019 to deal with bonds, but there is no plan to do so yet.