WASHINGTON — Congressional Republicans will miss a Memorial Day deadline set by the White House to complete work on a huge bill to supply new funds for troops overseas and hurricane victims at home.

Even though closed-door talks between top House and Senate negotiators had produced a series of tentative agreements, obstacles such as President Bush's $1.9 billion request for a new border security initiative are proving too difficult to resolve before Congress leaves Friday for a weeklong Memorial Day recess.

"We are going to take the necessary time to develop the right product that is narrowly focused on the war on terrorism and hurricane recovery," said House Appropriations Committee Chairman Jerry Lewis, R-Calif. He said an agreement would be reached soon after Congress returns in early June.

Just last week, the White House sent lawmakers a letter saying that it is "critical" that the measure — which ballooned from Bush's $92.2 billion request to almost $109 billion during its consideration by the Senate — be enacted before the end of May.

Failure to do so "would seriously impact" military operational accounts, delay re-equipping and preparation of units deployed to Iraq and slow training and equipping of Iraqi security forces, according to the May 18 letter from Clay Johnson, the acting budget director for the White House.

Pentagon spokesman Bryan Whitman said Wednesday, "These funds are urgently needed."

From a political perspective, the delay is a disappointment for GOP leaders, who are sending lawmakers back home for Memorial Day parades without having delivered needed money for overseas troops. And hurricane season will start without a replenishment of Gulf Coast relief funds.

Lewis and Thad Cochran, R-Miss., chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, have agreed to live within a White House demand that the emergency funding bill be limited to $92.2 billion for the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and hurricanes — plus $2.3 billion to combat bird flu.

According to congressional GOP aides familiar with the talks, who could speak candidly only on condition of anonymity, that has meant dumping or dramatically
scaling back Senate initiatives like $4 billion in agriculture disaster assistance to farmers to help them deal with high fuel prices and damage from floods and droughts last year.

An additional $648 billion obtained by Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., to beef up security at U.S. ports has been dropped, the aides said, despite a 421-2 vote in the House for a separate port security enhancement bill just three weeks ago.

Meanwhile, Cochran faces an uphill battle in trying to preserve controversial earmarks such as $700 million to relocate further inland a freight line that now runs near the Mississippi coast.

House GOP leaders strongly oppose the project, which would use the funds to purchase a rail line damaged by Hurricane Katrina — but rebuilt with almost $300 million in insurance proceeds. Mississippi wants to tear up the track and use the land to build a much-needed highway along the congested coastline, but activists have attacked the plan as a pork barrel boondoggle.

A key remaining challenge is devising a compromise border security plan.

Bush's border security plan, focused on hiring 1,000 new Border Patrol officers and sending 6,000 National Guard troops to help secure the Mexican border, is significantly different from a Senate plan sponsored by Judd Gregg, R-N.H. Gregg's plan, also budgeted for $1.9 billion, focuses on capital needs such as helicopters, Coast Guard vessels and vehicles.

The White House proposed cuts in Pentagon procurement accounts to finance the border plan, pinpointing savings that lawmakers had already gobbled for unrequested items such as V-22 tilt-rotor aircraft and C-17 cargo planes.

At the same time, Sen. Richard Shelby, R-Ala., is doomed to lose the bulk of $1.2 billion in aid he devised for the Gulf Coast fishing and seafood industry.

Texas GOP Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison said she fears that Texas will lose hundreds of millions of dollars to compensate schools for taking on evacuees of Katrina.

"I am worried about it," Hutchison said. "We have so much that wasn't in the original Bush submission."