**FAQS for Government Shutdown**

**What is a government shutdown?**

When Congress does not pass the annual funding by the end of the fiscal year (September 30th), the agencies that depend on that funding have to discontinue all non-essential discretionary funding until that funding is passed and signed into law. Essential services and mandatory spending programs continue to function.

**What is the main impact of a government shutdown?**

If Congress does not fund the government by passing the 12 annual appropriations bills, hundreds of thousands of federal workers can be furloughed without pay. Non-essential services, everything from trash pick up at national parks to passport applications, might be disrupted.

**What services are affected?**

Each federal agency has its own guidance on what to do in case of a government shutdown, and these guidelines are coordinated by the Office of Management and Budget. Essential workers, like mail delivery, flight safety operatives, and law enforcement agents would remain on the job but without pay, while nonessential workers would be told not to report to work.

**I am a federal employee, how do I know if I will have to work during a shutdown?**

There are three categories of federal employees in the event of a shutdown:

1. Furloughed: must stop working and pay is delayed until appropriations are authorized
2. Excepted: continuing to work, but pay is delayed until appropriations are authorized
3. Exempted: Not impacted by the government shut down

**Will federal employees receive pay for furloughed time?**

Federal employees are guaranteed back pay if furloughed due to legislation passed in January of 2019.

**Will I receive my Social Security during a government shutdown?**

Because Social Security is a mandatory spending program funded through separate legislation, the Social Security Administration will continue to process and mail out checks to recipients.

**I rely on Medicare or Medicaid; will I still have access to services during a government shutdown?**

Medicare and Medicaid are mandatory programs and would continue to operate during a shutdown. However, HHS employees, who answer Medicare billing questions and process enrollment applications, among others, are paid through annual appropriations and might affected by the shutdown, so a prolonged shutdown could mean disruptions from a lack of staff to administer claims and billing.

**I am a veteran, what will happen to the VA and my benefits during a government shutdown?**

VA and military hospitals will likely remain open, though there might be delays in scheduling new appointments. Various benefit functions under VBA, such as Education Benefit Claims processing and payments, insurance processing, loan guaranty programs, Veteran Readiness and Employment payment processing, VBA National Call Centers (except for Education), Compensation and Pension Claims processing and payments, Decision Review Operations Centers and management will also continue to function in the event of a shutdown.

**I rely on assistance programs like SNAP and WIC to support my family, what should I expect during a government shutdown?**

* **Will my EBT card stop working if there is a government shutdown?**
* SNAP will continue to provide benefits during a shutdown, subject to the availability of funding in USDA’s contingency reserves. Each month’s benefits are issued the month prior, so SNAP recipients should receive their October benefits. If a government shutdown lasts longer than a month, USDA maintains reserve funding to allow SNAP to continue.
* **Will other cash transfer benefits like TANF and WIC be available during a shutdown?**
* Families will be able to use cash benefits at stores and retrieve funds from ATM machines as they normally do. WIC benefits are currently available for use in stores, subject to availability of funds at USDA.

**I have children in public schools, will schools remain open during a government shutdown?**

Schools are funded on a state and local level and will remain open during a federal government shutdown.

**Will the postal service remain open during a government shutdown?**

Yes, the U.S. Postal Service is self-funded, and all employees will continue to deliver mail.

**I am a farmer/food producer, how will a shutdown affect me?**

In the case of a full government shutdown, certain critical USDA services will continue with minimal administrative support, and depending on the level of funds USDA has left, other services might be available. If USDA completely runs out of funding, the Farm Service Agency County offices will close, new rural development loans and other grants will cease, as will timber sales, forest fuel reduction activities, and supervision and access to public recreational areas and parks. Livestock and commodity reports, including economic projections will no longer be published.

In case of a shutdown, food inspections services will continue for processed eggs, meat, poultry, grain and other commodities, as well as for import and export activities. Forest Service law enforcement, emergency and natural disaster response, and national defense preparedness efforts will continue.

**Are federal courts still open?**

Yes, under the Anti-Deficiency Act, federal courts can continue to work during a lapse in appropriations in order to support the exercise of Article III judicial powers. Each court and federal defender’s office would determine the staffing resources needed to support such work.

**I am planning to travel and need a visa or a passport, will I be able to receive them?**

Visa and passport operations are fee funded, so you may still obtain your US passport and other important documents during a shutdown. Unfortunately, because US Passport Offices are frequently found inside federal buildings, they won’t be open during the shutdown. To find out if a passport agency in your area is open, the U.S. State Department advises giving them a call-in advance.

**I am waiting to hear on an immigration case, what can I expect during a shutdown?**

Immigration court cases on the detained docket will proceed while non-detained docket cases will be reset for a later date when funding resumes. Courts with detained dockets will receive all filings but will only process those involving detained dockets. Courts with only non-detained dockets will not be open and will not accept filings. Courts should issue an updated notice of hearing to respondents or representatives of record for reset hearings.