



## **Government Shutdown FAQs**

### **Why does the government shut down?**

The government shuts down when Congress is unable to pass appropriations bills that finance the operations of federal agencies and programs, such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH) or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These appropriations bills are designed to fund the government until the conclusion of each fiscal year, which ends on September 30. Currently, the government is funded through that date. If a new appropriations bill isn't enacted by this deadline, Congress needs to pass a temporary measure, known as a continuing resolution (CR), which sustains the government's funding at its current level. In the absence of an approved appropriations bill or a CR, the government faces a shutdown due to lack of authorized funding.

### **Will I continue to receive my Social Security and SSI checks?**

Recipients will continue to receive their Social Security and SSI checks. The Social Security Administration (SSA) will continue providing limited services like issuing Social Security cards and holding appointments for benefit applications. However, SSA will stop some activities like benefit verifications and processing overpayments and the public will likely experience increased wait times for customer service.

### **Will Medicare and Medicaid benefits be affected?**

Medicare, Medicaid and disability insurance will be largely unaffected by a shutdown lasting less than three months. Current beneficiaries will continue to receive their benefits.

### **What is the impact on veterans' services?**

All Veterans Affairs (VA) medical facilities and clinics will remain fully operational. The VA will continue to process veterans' benefits.

### **Will military and federal retiree benefits be suspended?**

Military and federal retirees will continue to receive their retirement benefits. Processing new applications or other requested changes will be delayed.

### **Will my mail still arrive?**

Yes. The U.S. Postal Service is not affected by a shutdown.

### **Will commercial air travel be affected?**

In prior shutdowns, air traffic controllers, Transportation Security Administration (TSA) officers, and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agents remained on the job. However, like all federal employees, they will not be paid until the shutdown is over. During the 2018-2019 shutdown, air traffic controllers worked without pay, causing widespread delays and even a [temporary halt](#) of incoming flights at LaGuardia airport.

### **What is the impact on small businesses?**

In prior shutdowns, the Small Business Administration (SBA) stopped processing new business loans, such as through the 7(a) and 504 programs. However, SBA's Disaster Loan Program continued regular operations.

### **What is the impact on federal housing loans?**

In prior shutdowns, the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) stopped insuring some new mortgages and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) stopped processing some new loans. The Department of Agriculture (USDA) also stopped new loan and loan guarantee activity. The VA will continue to guarantee home loans.

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### **What is the impact on disaster relief efforts?**

FEMA staff will still respond to emergencies. In prior shutdowns, long-term projects were delayed due to a lack of funding in the Disaster Relief Fund.

### **What is the impact on food safety activities?**

In prior shutdowns, some Food and Drug Administration (FDA) food safety activities — such as routine inspections of facilities — were delayed. During the 2018-2019 partial shutdown, the Food and Drug Administration suspended routine inspections, increasing public health risks.

### **What happens to federal employees during a shutdown?**

Federal employees from shut-down agencies are either furloughed—prohibited from work and unpaid—or required to work without pay if their roles are deemed essential to public safety. While Congress has traditionally approved retroactive payment for these employees once the government reopens, this does not prevent the immediate financial difficulties

they face. Following the 2019 Shutdown, Congress passed the Government Employee Fair Treatment Act of 2019, which provides immediate retroactive back pay to federal employees after a shutdown ends. During the 2018-2019 partial government shutdown, around 2 million people were employed by the federal government; 380,000 of them were furloughed and 420,000 worked without pay. Many delayed mortgage or credit card payments, risking late fees or loan defaults. In 2013, there were over 2 million federal employees, with about 850,000 furloughed during the shutdown. Government contractors, unlike direct federal employees, typically do not receive back pay after shutdowns. In the 2018-2019 shutdown, it's estimated that 4.1 million people worked under government contracts, though the exact number of those furloughed is unclear.

### **What is the impact on U.S. military personnel and federal law enforcement?**

In previous shutdowns, all active-duty and Guard and Reservists on active-duty orders were accepted and therefore are required to work. On-base non-acute health care ceased, but off-base care provided through Tricare was not affected. On-base child care was open on a case-by-case basis. Federal law enforcement was also required to work. Both military personnel and federal law enforcement will not be paid until after the shutdown is over.

### **What is the process to end a government shutdown, and can the President unilaterally end it?**

To end a government shutdown, Congress needs to pass, and the President must sign, appropriations bills to fund the departments and agencies that have been shut down. The President does not have the power to end a shutdown unilaterally. The funding bills follow the same legislative process as any other bill, requiring approval from both the House and Senate before the President can sign them into law.

### **Which federal facilities will be impacted by this government shutdown?**

Among others, the following federal facilities may be affected in the event of a government shutdown:

- Military bases, arsenals, depots, and federal armories
- Veterans' Affairs medical facilities
- Federal prisons and courthouses
- National laboratories
- National Park System facilities, National Forests, and other federally owned or managed lands
- Ports including seaports, airports, and intermodal terminals that may host federal customs processing facilities or law enforcement
- IRS facilities

- Law enforcement agencies like the FBI, ATF, DEA, or CBP
- General federal office buildings