



Federal Government Shutdown Deadlines Nears

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congress is facing a September 30 deadline to keep the government funded. If lawmakers cannot agree on a spending package or pass a short-term continuing resolution, much of the federal government will grind to a halt at 12:01 a.m. on October 1. For tribal nations, the consequences of a shutdown can be particularly harmful, as many important programs and services are administered through federal agencies.

When the government shuts down, federal departments must furlough employees and suspend non-essential activities until funding is restored. Essential operations, such as law enforcement, border patrol, and health services, typically continue although many employees are forced to work without pay. Past shutdowns have delayed tax documents for students, caused disruptions in food stamp benefits, and shuttered national parks. The Office of Management and Budget has not yet released updated contingency plans, making it difficult to assess which programs the Trump Administration will classify as essential, and which may be at risk of being stalled.

For tribes, the stakes are high. Federal agencies, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Indian Health Service (IHS), provide direct services that support education, healthcare, infrastructure, and community development. Although both BIA and IHS have confirmed they will not implement a Reduction in Force, and IHS essential services for tribal members will continue, the uncertainty surrounding a shutdown creates strain on planning and operations. Many tribal employees working under federal programs may be left in limbo, unsure of whether their work will be funded or paused.

The political impasse in Congress shows little sign of immediate resolution. Republican leaders want a short-term extension of government funding paired with added security resources, while Senate Democrats are pressing for provisions such as extended Affordable Care Act subsidies. President Trump has signaled resistance to compromise, raising the likelihood of a prolonged shutdown.

Amid this uncertainty, the Navajo Nation Washington Office has been proactive. NNWO has reached out to federal agencies to secure assurances that programs providing direct services will not be disrupted and has maintained close coordination with the Navajo Nation's congressional delegation to mitigate long-term impacts. While the possibility of a shutdown looms large, NNWO is working to ensure that the trust responsibility to the Navajo people is not forgotten in the chaos of Washington politics.