



CONGRESS SHOULD PREVENT GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWNS

Ask: Support the Prevent Government Shutdowns Act, or similar legislation.

- S. 135/ H.R. 5696 by Sen. Lankford, Sen. Hassan, Rep. Arrington, Rep. Panetta, bipartisan cosponsors.
- Extend current funding levels while Congress finalizes appropriations bills.
- Keep Congress in session every day doing appropriations bills until it enacts them all.

The chance of shutdowns drives bad results.

- Harmful process: It sets up an exclusionary, tightly controlled omnibus bill where leaders and White House have the leverage. Most members vote for an omnibus to avoid a shutdown, not because it's better than current policy. Mistrust results.
- Uncertainty: Imminent and actual shutdowns disrupt important federal services for the American people in defense, border security, medical research and development, and much more. Similarly, the risk of shutdowns imposes hidden costs on society that undermine prosperity.
- Budget delays: Using a holiday deadline to jam through an omnibus means waiting months beyond the start of the fiscal year. This delays the subsequent budget cycle too.
- Spending bloat: Omnibus bills include wasteful spending to minimize interest group complaints to sympathetic members of Congress.

Automatic continuing appropriations ("auto CR") can produce better outcomes.

- Timely appropriations: Not later than October, compared to mid-December today.
- No disruptions: Services that Americans expect would continue at current levels.
- Less waste: Agencies, the public, and Congress wouldn't have to plan for or deal with shutdowns.
- Bottom-up solutions: Congress would need an inclusive process to develop policy, which would help restore trust. Adjusting for inflation, population, and changing priorities would be compelling reasons for Congress to do new appropriations each year.

- Less budget bloat: Member engagement would replace padding accounts for special interests to pass legislation. Shifting resources to higher priorities would drive continually better results.

Federal and state experience shows that Congress should prevent shutdowns.

- Congress didn't create shutdowns: A 1980 Carter Administration opinion did, and completing appropriations bills on time has been rare ever since.
- Auto CRs are common in states: They are comprehensive in NC, WI, and RI and are partial in 18 other states: AK, AZ, CA, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, KY, ME, MN, MT, NH, OK, SD, UT, VA, and WY. Auto CRs don't delay budget bills, and all states enact their budget or appropriations bills.
- Spending restraint: States with auto CRs have less bloat and spend a little less per capita.
- Wisconsin: House Speaker Robin Vos: "I always say to legislative leaders that if you could trade away something that the executive wants in order to get that one piece of power, I think it's worth it."
- North Carolina: An auto CR helped members of the General Assembly block Medicaid expansion for a decade. In 2023, it helped them enact a budget with pro-growth tax cuts and universal educational freedom.

For additional information:

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