



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES, AFL-CIO

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November 7, 2025

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), which represents more than 800,000 federal and D.C. workers, I write to endorse the “Shutdown Fairness Act,” Sen. Ron Johnson’s amended bill that would immediately appropriate funds for federal agencies to pay military personnel and federal civilian employees during lapses in government funding, such as the one that began on October 1 and *is now the longest in U.S. history*.

This bill, as amended, is significant improvement over the original version, which already received bipartisan support in a Senate vote on October 23. The new bill now covers employees who have been furloughed as well as excepted employees who have been working without pay. It provides no discretion whom to pay or not pay and seeks to end the unfortunate practice where federal workers become political pawns in spending battles between the two parties. Please remember, federal workers have no choice in whether they are furloughed or not.

Today, most federal employees will once again not receive scheduled biweekly paychecks – *the second zero-dollar paycheck since the current shutdown began last month*. With Thanksgiving just weeks away, the time has come for Congress to act. Every missed paycheck deepens the financial hole in which federal workers and their families find themselves. By the time Congress reaches a compromise, the damage will have been done – to their bank accounts, their credit ratings, their health, and their dignity.

This week I spent time distributing food to federal employees at a food bank in Maryland just outside of D.C. These same employees, who can no longer afford to eat or provide for their families, are often still required to come to work and provide vital services to the American public, such as assuring transportation security. This state of affairs should be morally repugnant to every member of Congress.

To be clear, this bill is not intended as a substitute for a return to an orderly appropriations process that would fund the operations of the federal government in time for the start of a new fiscal year. It is intended to provide immediate relief to our military and to federal employees facing financial collapse.

Up until 1995, lapses in government funding were rare, of short duration, and limited in scope. Since then, government shutdowns, and threats of government shutdowns, have become commonplace, and federal workers and their families have paid the price in a way demanded of no other Americans. The “Shutdown Fairness Act” is long overdue. Please support the bill.

Sincerely,

Everett B. Kelley
National President

