

Government Shutdown Notwithstanding

A “government shutdown” is when the government fails to pass a budget, resulting in the shutting down of “non-essential services,” furloughing said employees. Furlough does not mean fired or laid off, it means employees are sent home and docked pay.

Services that will not be affected include the military, law enforcement, mail delivery, air traffic control, VA hospitals, Social Security and Medicare checks, food stamps, and essential emergency services. They may have their pay docked during the shutdown, but will be retroactively paid.

Fun fact: all 535 members of Congress still get paid. Base pay for each member is \$174,000 a year plus benefits, pension, and security detail. Members of congressional leadership receive pay bumps, as high as \$223,500 a year. The president’s salary is \$400,000 a year.

Government shutdowns are pretty common. The ones getting media attention are ones where furloughs could happen. Every president since 1976 has experienced shutdowns, Republicans and Democrats alike.

Non-essential services that often get furloughed are national parks, monuments, and museums, the processing of applications of passports and visas, the maintenance of government websites, etc.

Economically speaking, government shutdowns do little harm to GDP. The economy quickly recovers after a budget is passed following a government shutdown. The claims from the left “the poor will go hungry” and from the right “the military will shut down” are purely partisan.

During the latest 2018 shutdown talks, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY) announced Wednesday his latest continuing resolution “will provide the resources necessary to continue normal operations through February 8th.”

The plan is to “make sure we don’t end this year the way we began it – with another government shutdown because of Democrats’ allergy to sensible immigration policies,” says the career politician, despite the fact a shutdown will not take boots away from the border.

Senator McConnell and President Donald J. Trump (R-NY) could do the conservative thing and let the shutdown happen – permanently. They could tell Congress that the only government that ought to be funded is what is allowed in the U.S. Constitution.

But both agree more with Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and former president Barack Obama (D-IL) and less with conservatives on this issue. If Trump really wanted to drain the swamp, he could sternly start with three anti-PC words: “shut it down.” But a New York liberal will not do that. Neither would a Louisville liberal.

Bottom line: if it is considered “non-essential” then stop funding it period. Let the free market take care of it (conservatives used to preach about the free market). This is also the libertarian position. Check out the Libertarian Party if you are tired of the budget games Republicans and Democrats are playing.

McConnell and Trump are up for re-election in 2020. Across the aisle will not offer real difference. Libertarians want to repeal taxation and replace it with nothing. Voluntary funding is better.