



## 2025 government shutdown

# The government shutdown is over, but not everything is back to normal

UPDATED NOVEMBER 13, 2025 · 2:00 PM ET

By Rachel Treisman



A tour guide leads a group through the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C. on November 13, 2025, a day after the U.S. government reopened.

Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP via Getty Images

The longest government shutdown in U.S. history is officially over after President Trump signed a bill passed by Congress on Wednesday night.

The federal government is reopening. But after 43 days on pause, things may not return to business as usual right away. For instance, federal workers are still awaiting backpay and air travel disruptions are expected to linger.



### 2025 GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

**The longest government shutdown in U.S. history comes to a close**

And some impacts could continue much longer than six weeks, whether that's national parks trying to make up for lost visitor revenue or taxpayers waiting

longer for refunds from a backlogged Internal Revenue Service (IRS).

There's also the looming threat of another potential shutdown in the not-too-distant future, since this bill only funds the government through Jan. 30.

Here's a look at where things stand for now.

*Keep scrolling for updates, and jump by category here:*

Federal workers | SNAP | Smithsonian | Air travel | National parks | Taxes |  
Economic data

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## Federal employees return to work, awaiting back pay

Roughly 1.4 million federal workers have gone without pay for six weeks. Roughly half of them were required to keep working without paychecks, while hundreds of thousands of others were furloughed.

Russ Vought, director of the Office of Management and Budget, told agency heads to direct furloughed employees to return to work Thursday.

"Agencies should take all necessary steps to ensure that offices reopen in a prompt and orderly manner" on Thursday, Vought wrote in a Wednesday memo.



### 2025 GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

#### Judge indefinitely halts shutdown layoffs noting human toll

The timing of backpay is a different question.

After the government shutdown ending in January 2019 — then the longest in history — Congress passed a law ensuring back pay for federal workers "at the earliest date possible after the lapse in appropriations ends, regardless of scheduled pay dates."

But Trump appeared to suggest otherwise in public comments last month, leaving many feds worried.



## 2025 GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

**It's supposed to be payday for many federal workers. Instead, they're getting nothing**

The bill that Congress passed to end the shutdown guarantees back pay. It also reverses several agencies' attempted staffing reductions during the shutdown, which were paused by a federal judge, and prevents additional layoffs of federal employees through January.

Shaun Southworth, a federal employment attorney, said in an Instagram video that the timing of backpay will vary by agency based on their payroll providers, but most employees should start seeing deposits within days.

"Many employees historically saw deposits within the first business days after reopening," he says of the last shutdown. "A minority may roll to the next cycle if the system needs extra processing."

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**SNAP is back**



Daytona Beach residents wait in their cars during a free food distribution for SNAP recipients organized by the Volusia County Sheriff's Office and The Jewish Federation at the Daytona International Speedway last week.

*Miguel J. Rodriguez Carrillo/AFP via Getty Images*

The bill Congress passed to reopen the government funds the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) through September 2026.

The program, which some 42 million Americans rely on for food assistance, has been the subject of much uncertainty — and an escalating legal battle — in recent weeks. The Trump administration said last month that it would suspend SNAP funding in November due to the shutdown, prompting a wide outcry and a series of legal challenges.



#### 2025 GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

**SNAP funding pause to soon end, but anxiety and anger may linger**

While the administration initially said it would comply with two rulings requiring it to provide at least partial funding for SNAP in November, it balked — and ultimately appealed to the Supreme Court — after one of those judges said it must fund the program fully for the month. The Supreme Court paused that order (and extended that pause again on Tuesday, with the end of the shutdown in sight).

At this point, beneficiaries in some states have gotten their full monthly allocations, while others have gotten partial payments or nothing at all. Reopening the government means restarting SNAP, but it's not clear how quickly full

payments will resume, since that varies by state. And, as NPR has reported, many who rely on the program are worried that benefits could be cut again.

### Smithsonian institutions will reopen on a rolling basis



The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History, closed during the government shutdown, is expected to reopen Friday.

Stefani Reynolds/Bloomberg via Getty Images

The Smithsonian, which encompasses 21 museums and the National Zoo, says its reopening will be gradual.

Its website says the National Museum of American History, as well as the National Air and Space Museum and its Virginia annex, the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center, will open their doors on Friday.

All other museums and the zoo — including its beloved live animal cams — will reopen to the public "on a rolling basis" by Monday.

### Air travel won't bounce back overnight



A passenger waits for his flight at Los Angeles International Airport on Friday, as flight reductions began at major U.S. airports.

*Sarah Reingewirtz/Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG*

The shutdown snarled air travel in a tangle that experts say is beyond a quick fix.

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Escalating shortages of air traffic controllers — who have been required to work without pay — caused delays and disruptions at airports nationwide since early October. Then, last week, the Federal Aviation Administration ordered airlines to reduce air traffic at 40 of the country's busiest airports, starting by 4% and ramping up to 10% by this Friday.



## 2025 GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

### Why flight disruptions could linger even after the government shutdown ends

The FAA announced Wednesday that it would freeze flight reductions at the current 6% level, citing a rapid improvement in controller staffing. Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said air traffic controllers will get a lump sum payment equal to 70% of their back pay within 48 hours of the shutdown ending.

The agency says it will continue to assess "whether the system can gradually return to normal operations."

Airlines and aviation regulators have warned that flight disruptions are likely to continue once the government reopens. Airlines had to adjust their schedules to reduce flights, and those changes can take time to reverse.

"It's going to take a bit to unwind, and the responsibility is not going to fall completely on the air traffic control operation," former FAA administrator Randy Babbitt told NPR's *All Things Considered* on Tuesday. "A good deal of responsibility will be the carriers getting their schedules and the aircraft and personnel back in the right positions to resume normal flying."

Air travel experts have told NPR that even after the shutdown, lingering impacts could potentially complicate Thanksgiving travel — which is always a hectic time to fly.

### National Parks start to "pick up the pieces"



A sign posted by the National Park Service warns of closures at the Benjamin Rush Gardens in Philadelphia during the government shutdown earlier this month.

*Matthew Hatcher/Getty Images*

Most national parks stayed at least partially open during the shutdown, but with significantly reduced staffing (since thousands of National Park Service employees were furloughed) and limited services like visitor centers and trash pickup.

The National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), a nonprofit that advocates for national parks, said in a statement that it could take months for returning staff to address the damage.

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"For 43 days, many national parks were left open, vulnerable and unprotected," said Kristen Brengel, senior vice president of government affairs at NPCA. "The National Park Service, already pushed to its breaking point after losing 25% of permanent staff, is left to pick up the pieces."



#### NATIONAL

##### **As visitors flock to parks, deep cuts leave rangers and wildlife at risk**

National parks were already feeling the strain before the shutdown, forced by federal funding cuts to cancel ranger programs, close visitors centers and pause maintenance and research.

During the shutdown, parks were unable to collect millions of dollars in entrance and recreational fees, which Brengel says could delay construction projects and other visitor services. And nonprofits which diverted resources to help parks stay operational have depleted their budgets in the process, Brengel says, leaving them "unsure if they will ever fully recover those funds."

Congress' bill funds the National Park Service through January. But Brengel calls it "only a short-term reprieve," warning that another government shutdown could dampen the busy season by affecting the hiring of seasonal rangers for next spring and summer.

#### **The IRS is looking ahead to tax filing season**

The IRS furloughed nearly half of its approximately 74,000 workers and tried to lay off roughly 1,400 others — though those cuts were reversed as a result of the bill reopening the government.

The agency's operations were limited during the shutdown. It generally did not pay tax refunds during this period, scaled back its live telephone customer service supports, closed walk-in Taxpayer Assistance Centers and cancelled appointments related to cases with the Independent Office of Appeals and Taxpayer Advocate Service — which it says will be rescheduled once the government reopens.

Tax deadlines and laws remain in effect, and the IRS says it has continued critical operations related to next year's tax-filing season.



#### ECONOMY

##### **Here are 6 'Beautiful Bill' tax changes that will benefit wealthy Americans**

But some experts worry that the effects of the shutdown — on top of thousands of IRS job cuts enacted earlier this year — could make for a messy 2026 tax season.

In an October letter to Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, the American Institute of CPAs (AICPA) urged the IRS to take steps like pausing notice and collection activities during the shutdown. It wrote that since taxpayers can only respond to those by mail, the understaffed agency may not see their letters in time to fix

errors or address issues — and will have to deal with an unwieldy backlog when the government reopens.

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"This burden has the real potential to delay the 2026 filing season due to the increased stresses to our entire tax system," the accountants wrote.

Such disruptions have happened before.

The 2018-2019 shutdown left the IRS with over 5 million pieces of unprocessed mail, 80,000 unaddressed responses to Fiscal Year 2018 Earned Income Tax Credit audits and 87,000 amended returns waiting to be processed, according to a report by the National Taxpayer Advocate (an independent agency within the IRS).

And years earlier, the 16-day government shutdown in October 2013 delayed billions of dollars of tax refunds and created a backlog of 1.2 million income and Social Security number verification requests, according to the Committee for a Responsible Budget.



A 'We're Hiring' sign is taped to the window of a business in Miami, Florida. Federal jobs reports were delayed by the government shutdown.

*Joe Raedle/Getty Images*

### **Delayed economic reports may never be released**

The shutdown could leave permanent gaps in economic data.

The Labor Department's Bureau of Labor Statistics typically releases employment reports on the first Friday of each month, a practice that was paused in October and November. Even with the government reopening, their future is uncertain.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters on Wednesday that October's inflation and jobs reports will "likely never [be] released and all of that economic data released will be permanently impaired." She blamed Democrats for the shutdown, which she said "may have permanently damaged the federal statistical system."

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has not commented publicly on the status of the reports or updated its calendar of upcoming release dates. Economists expect the bureau to release its September jobs report (which was nearly ready when the government shut down on Oct. 1) first, and say it's an open question when — or whether — any October reports will be published.

### **Correction**

**Nov. 13, 2025**

An earlier version of this story featured a photo with incorrect caption information. The first photo was taken at the U.S. Capitol, not Reagan Washington National Airport.



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