



Effects of the Trump Shutdown In Alaska

By Saharra Griffin

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President Donald Trump's shutdown of the federal government over demands for billions of dollars in new border wall funding is already having profound consequences for hundreds of thousands of working Americans and a wide range of vital services. And each day the impasse continues, as funding dries up and more agencies exhaust emergency measures, these harmful effects will only be exacerbated.

Although the new Democratic House majority passed legislation to reopen the government, the president has continued to stall negotiations.¹ To enable the stalemate, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and other Republican senators reversed their earlier opposition to the shutdown just days after the chamber unanimously passed a similar deal.

Due to Trump's shutdown, an estimated 5,300 federal employees in Alaska are furloughed or working without pay.² Below is a breakdown of affected federal employees and agencies in the state.

"The partial federal government shutdown is casting uncertainty over the major fishing industry based in the Bering Sea, which has an annual catch valued at more than \$1 billion. January marks the opening of a number of major fisheries in Alaska ... [S]ome of the boats and one entire fishing fleet are still missing federal permits and inspections."
—NPR, January 4, 2019³

"The shutdown would only have to affect a small number of Bering Sea boats for the economic impact to be substantial—a single fishing trip for a large factory trawler can be worth millions of dollars." —The Anchorage Daily News, January 5, 2019⁴

U.S. Department of the Interior: 2,500 employees

In Alaska, an estimated 2,500 Interior Department employees, including those working for the following agencies, are furloughed or working without pay.

- **The National Park Service** supports the state's eight national parks.
- **The Bureau of Indian Affairs** funds critical services for 110,000 Alaskan Natives, including health care, law enforcement, housing, disaster relief, and infrastructure maintenance.⁵
- **The U.S. Geological Survey** is responsible for monitoring earthquakes, volcanoes, and flood concerns in Alaska. Earthquakes and aftershocks have been a major concern in the state since a magnitude 7.0 earthquake occurred several months ago. According to the agency, more than 4,500 aftershocks have occurred since that time⁶.
- **The Bureau of Land Management** manages 70 million acres of public lands in Alaska.
- **The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** operates 16 national wildlife refuges in the state.
- **The Bureau of Ocean Energy Management** Alaska Region Office manages the development of oil, natural gas, and renewable energy.

“And although wildfires are unlikely to bust out anytime soon, the shutdown is hampering the firefighting agency’s planning and preparation for the coming fire season ... ‘There’s a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes, even in December and January,’ says Tim Mowry, a spokesman for the Alaska Division of Forestry, the state firefighting agency [that] works closely with the federal Alaska Fire Service.”
 –KUAC, January 3, 2019⁷

U.S. Department of Agriculture: 900 employees

In Alaska, an estimated 900 Department of Agriculture employees, including those working for the following agencies, are furloughed or working without pay.⁸

- **The Forest Service** protects and manages Chugach and Tongass National Forests—more than 23 million acres of land.
- **The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service** defends the state's agricultural resources from pests and diseases.
- **The Office of Rural Development** offers loans and grants to help create jobs and support economic development in rural communities.

Additional agencies

The Trump shutdown is also harming the following workers and agencies:

- An estimated 1,100 Federal Aviation Administration and Transportation Security Administration employees at the state's 27 commercial airports
- An estimated 415 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration employees, including the National Marine Fisheries Service's federally managed fishery in the North Pacific and Arctic Oceans. Commercial and recreational fishing in Alaska supports 60,000 jobs and generates \$5 billion in sales annually.⁹

- An estimated 240 members of the U.S. Coast Guard at Sector Juneau, Sector Anchorage, Air Station Kodiak, and Air Station Sitka¹⁰
- U.S. Attorneys' Offices in Anchorage, Fair Banks, and Juneau

"[The Bureau of Land Management] said it is moving ahead with hosting four meetings over the next week in northern Alaska towns on the plan's environmental review process ... Other BLM operations, [including] the agency's Alaska office, are shut down with staff furloughed ... Conservation groups slammed the effort to open more places to drilling ... saying it threatens wildlife and important ecosystems."
 –The Hill, January 4, 2019¹¹

If the partial government shutdown continues, tax filing season could be more difficult for Alaska families and small businesses. Because IRS offices are closed and the agency is operating with a skeletal staff, taxpayers and preparers may have trouble accessing needed guidance.¹² Last year, the agency processed 6.1 million refunds within the first week of filing season in January.¹³

Moreover, Alaska's 69,000 small businesses are unable to receive guaranteed loans and technical assistance from the Small Business Administration state office in Anchorage.

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Endnotes

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- 2 Seth Hanlon and Saharra Griffin, "Effects of the Trump Shutdown on Federal Workers' Paychecks: State-by-State Estimates," Center for American Progress, December 21, 2018, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/economy/news/2018/12/21/464638/effects-trump-shutdown-federal-workers-paychecks-state-state-estimates/>.
- 3 Nat Herz, "Government Shutdown May Hamper Alaska's Lucrative Fishing Industry," NPR, January 4, 2019, available at <https://www.npr.org/2019/01/04/682061603/government-shutdown-may-hamper-alaskas-lucrative-fishing-industry>.
- 4 Nathaniel Herz, "Government shutdown, if it continues, could cost Alaska's lucrative Bering Sea fisheries," *The Anchorage Daily News*, January 5, 2019, available at <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/2019/01/05/government-shutdown-if-it-continues-could-cost-alaskas-lucrative-bering-sea-fisheries/>.
- 5 Bureau of Indian Affairs, "What We Do," available at <https://www.bia.gov/bia/ots/what-we-do> (last accessed January 2019).
- 6 John Thompson, "USGS Alaska in furlough as government shutdown continues," KTVA, December 26, 2018, available at <https://www.ktva.com/story/39698389/usgs-alaska-in-furlough-as-government-shutdown-continues>.
- 7 Tim Ellis, "Shutdown Hampers Federal Firefighting Agency's Preparations for Wildfire Season," KUAC, January 3, 2019, available at <http://fm.kuac.org/post/shutdown-hampers-federal-firefighting-agency-s-preparations-wildfire-season>.
- 8 U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Agencies," available at <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/agencies> (last accessed January 2019).
- 9 McDowell Group, "The Economic Value of Alaska's Seafood Industry" (2017), available at <https://www.mcdowellgroup.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ak-seafood-impacts-sep2017-final-digital-copy.pdf>.
- 10 U.S. Coast Guard, "Seventeenth Coast Guard District," available at <https://www.pacificarea.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/District-17/>.
- 11 Timothy Cama, "Trump administration presses ahead with Alaskan drilling plan despite shutdown," *The Hill*, January 4, 2019, available at <https://thehill.com/policy/energy-environment/423970-trump-administration-presses-ahead-with-alaskan-drilling-plan>.
- 12 Internal Revenue Service, "Contact Your Local IRS Office," available at <https://www.irs.gov/help/contact-your-local-irs-office>; Darla Mercado, "White House promises tax refunds will go out, but there's hardly anyone at the IRS to do the work," CNBC, January 7, 2019, available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/01/07/white-house-official-says-tax-refunds-will-be-sent-out-despite-government-shutdown.html>.
- 13 Internal Revenue Service, "Filing Season Statistics for Week Ending February 2, 2018," available at <https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/filing-season-statistics-for-week-ending-february-2-2018> (last accessed January 2019).