



Effects of the Trump Shutdown In Pennsylvania

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 12,600 federal employees in Pennsylvania are furloughed or working without pay.² Below is a breakdown of affected federal employees and agencies in the state.

"My husband and I spent a lot of time going over our budget with a fine tooth comb to prioritize essentials in case the shutdown continues for a while," Ms. [Rebecca] Maclean said. As a federal employee for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, Ms. Maclean is among thousands of government employees facing the same reality ... Not being able to count on a guaranteed paycheck is, at the least, a disruption to routine and a burden on financial stability." –Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, January 3, 2019

U.S. Department of Agriculture: 1,350 employees

In Pennsylvania, an estimated 1,350 Department of Agriculture employees, including those working for the following agencies, are furloughed or working without pay.⁴

- **The Farm Service Agency** state office in Harrisburg supports the state's 58,000 agricultural operations and facilitates new assistance programs under the farm bill.
- **The Food Safety and Inspection Service** prevents foodborne illness by ensuring that meat, poultry, and egg products produced in Pennsylvania are safe and accurately labeled.

- **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.
- **The Agricultural Research Service and the National Agricultural Statistics Service’s Pennsylvania Field Office** collect detailed agricultural production data.
- **The Forest Service** protects and manages Allegheny National Forest—more than half a million acres of land.

U.S. Department of the Interior: 990 employees

In Pennsylvania, an estimated 990 Interior Department employees, including those working for the following agencies, are furloughed or working without pay.

- **The National Park Service** supports the state’s national historic sites and trails, including Valley Forge, Gettysburg, and the Schuylkill River Valley.
- **The U.S. Geological Survey** conducts research on natural resource issues, including contamination of groundwater near Superfund sites⁵.
- **The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** operates three national wildlife refuges in the state.

“With more than 700 employees, the Environmental Protection Agency’s Philadelphia office is one of the biggest of the nation’s 10 regional offices. They inspect businesses from Pennsylvania to Virginia to make sure they’re not polluting rivers or disposing of hazardous material incorrectly. They manage the cleanups of abandoned hazardous Superfund sites ... [Employees] say that virtually stopping the agency’s operations poses a risk to public health and safety.” –The Philadelphia Inquirer, January 10, 2019⁶

Additional agencies

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

- An estimated 1,200 Federal Bureau of Prisons employees at Pennsylvania’s eight federal prisons and correctional institutions
- An estimated 775 Federal Aviation Administration and Transportation Security Administration employees at the state’s nine commercial airports
- An estimated 700 Environmental Protection Agency employees
- U.S. Attorneys’ Offices in Philadelphia, Allentown, Scranton, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and Erie

If the partial government shutdown continues, tax filing season could be more difficult for Pennsylvania 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.⁷ Last year, the agency processed 6.1 million refunds within the first week of filing season in January.⁸

Already reeling from the effects of retaliatory tariffs and Trump's incoherent trade policy, Pennsylvania's farmers are now being needlessly harmed by Trump's government shutdown. The Department of Agriculture's loan and financial aid department is closed, so farmers who have not yet filed tariff mitigation will not receive payments until the shutdown ends.⁹ The department has also delayed the release of major crop forecasts—the Crop Production Report and World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimate—on which farmers and traders rely to plan production.¹⁰ Farmers must decide whether to wait for the shutdown to end or make decisions based on less dependable information.

Ironically, due to Trump's temper tantrum for the sake of so-called border security, the state's immigration courts in Philadelphia and York are now closed, stalling lawful asylum proceedings in an already backlogged system.¹¹

Moreover, Pennsylvania's 1 million small businesses are unable to receive guaranteed loans and technical assistance from the Small Business Administration state offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

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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 Julian Routh, "Shutdown not a game for families of federal workers," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 3, 2019, available at <https://www.post-gazette.com/local/region/2019/01/03/Government-Shutdown-Pennsylvania-federal-workers/stories/201901020176>.
- 4 U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Agencies," available at <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/agencies> (last accessed January 2019).
- 5 Pennsylvania Water Science, "Contaminants in groundwater near North Penn Area Superfund sites," U.S. Geological Survey, available at https://www.usgs.gov/centers/pa-water/science/contaminants-groundwater-near-north-penn-area-superfund-sites?qt-science_center_objects=0#qt-science_center_objects.
- 6 Juliana Feliciano Reyes and Frank Kummer, "The air and the water are not being protected: Work in Philly's EPA office stalls during government shutdown," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, January 10, 2019, available at <http://www.philly.com/science/climate/epa-philadelphia-government-shutdown-superfund-sites-20190110.html>.
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- 8 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).
- 9 Juliet Linderman, "Government shutdown could block federal aid to farmers hit by trade war," Associated Press, December 28, 2018, available at <https://www.desmoines-register.com/story/news/2018/12/28/government-shutdown-federal-aid-farmers-usda-payments-presidential-trump-trade-war-china-soybeans/2434143002/>.
- 10 Julie Ingwersen, "U.S. delays key agriculture reports due to government shutdown," Reuters, January 4, 2019, available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-shutdown-usda/u-s-delays-key-agriculture-reports-due-to-government-shutdown-idUSKCN10Y1K9>.
- 11 Lisa Riordan Seville and Hannah Rappleye, "Shutdown nearly shuts U.S. immigration courts, but deportations continue," NBC News, January 5, 2019, available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/immigration/shutdown-nearly-shuts-u-s-immigration-courts-deportations-continue-n954826>.