



MEMORANDUM

TO: U.S. Chamber Members
FROM: Neil Bradley, Executive Vice President, Chief Policy Officer, and Head of Strategic Advocacy
DATE: October 2, 2025
RE: Government Shutdown and Chamber Actions

For the sixth time in 30 years, the federal government has entered a shutdown. Now, the two most pertinent questions are:

1. How might this shutdown differ from prior shutdowns?
2. How long will this shutdown last?

The following memo shares our insights on these questions and details the actions being taken by the Chamber.

Differences From Prior Shutdowns:

Administrative Flexibility: While federal agencies are prohibited from spending funds not appropriated by Congress, they have a great deal of flexibility in determining what functions and agencies are deemed essential and therefore must remain open with staff working without pay. Agencies issue updated shutdown plans in conjunction with each shutdown. Federal News Network is maintaining a comprehensive list of those plans available [here](#).

Additional Funding from the One Big Beautiful Bill: The recently enacted tax reconciliation bill also included significant appropriations for the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. This may give both agencies greater flexibility to fund operations during the government shutdown.

Permanent Changes: In the past, administrations have furloughed non-essential staff, bringing them back and reopening agency operations and activities once funding was restored. The Trump Administration has indicated that they might instead proceed with permanent reductions in force (RIFs) for staff operating programs that they do not believe should be funded. In essence, this would take advantage of the lapse in appropriations to try and make more permanent changes. Once the government reopens, it is unclear how the administration would proceed with programs that would have funding, but no staff. This is also likely to raise legal questions.

Pay for Furloughed Employees: After past government shutdowns, Congress has had to affirmatively act to pay employees who were furloughed (employees who were deemed essential and had to work are automatically paid when the government reopens since the government owes them for the work provided). During the last government shutdown in 2019, Congress passed a new law automatically providing pay for any employee furloughed during any future government shutdowns. Furloughed employees will be automatically paid once the government reopens.

How Long Will This Shutdown Last:

While there is no way to say for certain how long this shutdown will last, there are certain things to watch for as an indication.

Level of Media and Public Attention: In the past, government shutdowns have received nearly non-stop negative media attention with stories detailing the hardships created for federal employees and those who rely on government services or simply engage with the government (e.g. images of national parks chained shut). This has



helped encourage policymakers to end the shutdown. This is a very different media landscape from previous shutdowns, and it is possible that media and public attention will be diverted to other issues, reducing pressure to reopen the government.

Impact of Administration Action to Make Permanent Changes: In the past, the leveraging party (i.e. the party trying to extract something in exchange for keeping the government open) has been perceived as initiating the shutdown and ultimately has lost the shutdown fight. If the administration aggressively moves to take advantage of the shutdown to make permanent changes it is possible that the normal political dynamic becomes scrambled.

While some have suggested that the threat of permanent changes could prompt Congressional Democrats to support reopening the government, others suggest that it might further entrench their position.

Pay Day: In the past, missed pay days have been an action forcing event that moves policymakers to reopen the government. Major paydays for civilian and military employees the week of October 12th could bring pressure to end this shutdown.

Senate Democrats to Watch: Three Senate Democrats have supported the effort to keep the government open. Republicans need the support of four or five more Democrats to invoke cloture and reopen the government (five if Senator Paul continues to vote no).

In March, 10 Democrats supported cloture on the bill to keep the government funded. Most observers are watching for how Senators Hassan, Peters, and Shaheen approach the shutdown, but those three alone will not be enough to invoke cloture.

Already Voting to Open the Government	Senators to Watch	Leadership & Key Allies
Cortez-Masto	Hassan	Durbin
Fetterman	Peters	Gillibrand
King	Shaheen	Schatz
		Schumer

Our View: While far from certain, the current political dynamics suggest that this shutdown could be on the longer end of the historical norm for a full government shutdown, possibly stretching past the middle of October.

Shutdown	Scope	Length
November 14, 1995	Partial	5
December 16, 1995	Partial	21
October 1, 2013	Full	16
January 19, 2018	Full	2
December 22, 2018	Partial	35
October 1, 2025	Full	??



What The Chamber Is Doing:

The Chamber:

- issued a statement calling on all parties to prevent a shutdown, available [here](#);
- sent a letter urging Senators to pass legislation to keep the government open, available [here](#); and
- is providing guidance to small business on navigating a shutdown, available [here](#).

The Chamber is also collecting information about how the shutdown is impacting the private sector and economy.

For example, the Small Business Administration supports loans totaling roughly \$860 million a week for 1,600 small businesses. These loan programs are closed during the shutdown.

We are using this information to (1) illustrate to policymakers the cost of the government shutdown and (2) engage the administration about essential operations that need to remain open.

You can share examples of problems caused by the shutdown with us at shutdown@uschamber.com. The identities of any submissions will be kept strictly confidential.