



Federal Government workers lose first paycheck due to shutdown

January 11, 2019 **Sasha Foo**

SAN DIEGO (KUSI) – The effects of the partial government shutdown are kicking in for people like Christian Rodriquez, who works as a corrections officer at the federal prison in downtown San Diego. Rodriquez and other officers at the Metropolitan Correctional Center are still reporting for work, but because of the shutdown, he’s working without pay.

“Today was a rude awakening,” said Rodriquez.

January 11 was the first day that paychecks for federal employees were issued without pay. Rodriquez, a father of four children said he’s worried about how he’s going to provide for his family.

According to the website, Governing.com, there are 250,000 people who work for the federal government in California, including military personnel. About 140,000 are civilian employees.

Tracy Sagale, the president of the union that represents corrections officers said on this first day without a paycheck, 20 officers out of the prison’s 165 corrections officers decided not to come to work. Sagale said some of them are working a second job or taking time off to find one.

While supervising the 1,000 inmates in the prison is stressful enough, Sagale said he's concerned about his officers' safety, when many are worried about paying bills. Some officers are working double shifts to cover for co-workers who aren't showing up.

"We have to have laser focus when we're working up here. So, unfortunately, the ones that are coming to work with the staff calling in, now we're working 60 hours. It's supposed to be overtime, but now you're working 60 hours for free," Sagale said.

To help ease the financial hardships, several local credit unions are stepping up. San Diego County Credit Union and Cabrillo Credit Union are offering their existing members a no-interest loan to cover the money they're missing from their paycheck. In his budget briefing this week, the Governor of California said federal workers can collect unemployment from the State of California.

As the shutdown drags on, the people in the middle said they're the ones getting the squeeze.

"I'm blaming both sides, but I'm asking both sides to come back to the table and figure it out," Sagale said.

Facing an even tougher situation, are the people who work for the government as contractors. They're not being paid currently and unlike the corrections officers and others who work as employee of the federal government, contractors won't collect any back pay, once the government returns to normal operations.

The Combined Federal Campaign, the federal government's workplace fundraising program, today announced that it will provide short-term food, rent and utility assistance to public-sector workers in San Diego County affected by the ongoing government shutdown.

The program allows federal workers to donate money to charities of their choice through payroll deduction. With more than 800,000 federal employees currently furloughed or working without pay due to the shutdown, the CFC and its affiliated charities are working to support the affected workers.

Among those charities is the San Diego Humane Society, which will offer free dog food to shutdown-affected workers at its three campuses in San Diego, Escondido and Oceanside Jan. 14 from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., with funding help from the CFC.