



News / Politics & Government

Government shutdown expected to be costly, disruptive for San Diego



If the 2013 shutdown is any precedent, every week the feds are out of commission the region will miss about \$7 million in economic activity.

If federal lawmakers fail to keep the government funded, and the United States shuts down for everything except essential operations, the San Diego's economy would lose millions.

By **Joshua Stewart and Kate Morrissey** · Contact Reporters

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Quick read

- Like the rest of the nation, San Diego will be affected by a federal shutdown.
- In 2013's shutdown, the region stood to lose \$7 million in economic activity per week.
- There are about 35,000 federal employees in the San Diego area, but not all would be furloughed
- The military will report for duty, but might not get paid beyond Feb. 1.

Full story

Visitors hoping to catch the views from Cabrillo National Monument on Saturday got an early look at what a government shutdown could mean for San Diego.

U.S. Park Ranger Ralph Jones set up signs on Saturday morning to let visitors know that the monument was closed because of the shutdown, which went into effect at midnight the night before.

Cars and cyclists turned around after finding out, though some drove all the way to the last set of signs just to be sure the monument was really closed.

Ketsia Delinoir, who recently came to San Diego because of her work in the Navy, was hiking in to see the monument for the first time when Jones told her it was closed.

Most local offices for federal agencies are closed on the weekend in general, so more San Diegans are likely to be impacted come Monday morning if [Congress](#) doesn't pass a spending bill before then.

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Many federal employees will either be furloughed when they report to work on Monday or will work without pay to keep critical parts of the government running.

With about 35,000 federal employees living in the San Diego region, San Diego's economy stands to lose millions of dollars.

If the 2013 shutdown is any precedent, for every week the feds are out of commission the San Diego region will miss about \$7 million in economic activity, due in large part to furloughed government employees and ones who still have to show up to their job but don't get their regular paycheck.

Cabrillo Credit Union, with many federal employees as members, is one organization that has contingency plans in the event of a government shutdown, including a program that gives loans at zero percent interest on what would have been pay-day to tide federal workers over until the government is funded again.

The largest part of the local federal economy, the military, will at least temporarily keep working as usual. But if the shutdown lasts beyond Feb. 1, they'll still have to report for duty but won't get their regular paycheck, a problem that could mean less cash flowing through San Diego. The sting, however, could be shorter than the shutdown. In 2013 lawmakers passed the Pay Our Military Act, restoring payroll for service members and putting about 400,000 civilian defense employees back to work.

Military families could see a strain on their household budgets since commissaries — cheap grocery stores on base — were shut down in 2013 after staying open an extra day to sell perishable food (overseas commissaries remained open, however). Exchanges — department stores service members can use — kept their doors open. It's unclear what will happen in this shutdown.

A White House report on the 2013 shutdown found that defense contracts with small businesses were cut by nearly 33 percent and spending decreased by 40 percent compared to the previous two years. Some contractors had to temporarily lay off employees. A Defense Department memo issued Thursday said that fully-funded contracts awarded before the shutdown remain in effect.

The region's biotechnology industry could also be hit. Some research laboratories rely on federal grants that might not arrive as timely as expected, and Food and Drug Administration approvals would hit a wall.

While the county struggles with an unusually high number of flu cases, including 142 deaths as of the second week of this month, during the last furlough the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reduced its flu vaccination effort and put its weekly flu report on hiatus. The last furlough, however, was much earlier in the flu season.

The Cleveland National Forest in San Diego County and national parks elsewhere may remain open to visitors, but might be unstaffed as ranger stations will be closed, and some trails might not be accessible if gates remain locked.

Programs like e-verify, which allows employers to check a potential employee's work authorization, will not function during the shutdown.

Agencies like Customs and Border Protection and the Transportation Security Administration will likely keep on many of their staff to work mission critical positions on the border, at ports of entry and at airports.

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Joshua Wilson, vice president of the National Border Patrol Council Local 1613, said that administrative support or training positions would not be staffed during the shutdown. He anticipated agents in those positions would go to their stations to “work the line” until Congress votes to fund the government again.

“It really puts a kink in our operations, plus we have the added bonus that none of us get paid,” Wilson said.

He said agents are especially frustrated because of the reason for the shutdown.

“It’s doubly insulting that it’s being done to promote the advocacy of a group of illegal aliens,” Wilson said. “You can imagine why that would be really insulting for a Border Patrol agent.”

Congress failed to pass a spending bill by Friday night’s deadline because of a stalemate in negotiations over the fate of so called “dreamers” — unauthorized immigrants who came to the U.S. as children.

President Donald Trump ended an Obama-era program in September that protected those immigrants from deportation and allowed them to work.

Dulce Garcia, an immigration attorney and a beneficiary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, said she felt a mix of emotions over the shutdown.

“I’m sorry that it has had to come down to this, but I think our leaders in the White House could have prevented this months ago,” Garcia said. “Our lives as dreamers, they’re really at stake here. Deportation is a reality for us. The inability to work is a reality for us. This is the best chance we’ve gotten in decades to get it resolved.”

“If we miss this opportunity, maybe we won’t have another one until we have a different president,” Garcia added. “I’m glad history was made yesterday. I know it’s bad for some, but I hope they can see past it and know in their hearts that this was the right thing to do.”

On Saturday, still hoping for a solution, local members of the House of Representatives, as did much of the rest of Congress, stayed in Washington instead of returning to their districts for the weekend. Democrats said that the budget problem is a symptom of dysfunctional leadership, while the Republican members were quiet on the matter.

“Republicans have shut down the government despite having control of the House, the Senate, and the White House,” Rep. [Juan Vargas](#), D-San Diego, said in a statement he posted on Twitter. He and other members of his party said it’s reasonable to pass a spending bill that funds a child health insurance program, community health centers, and provides protections for “dreamers.”

And Rep. [Susan Davis](#) said the government’s reliance on short-term spending bills rather than a long-term plan is bad governance.

“Running the government month by month causes long standing harm to people and our security,” the San Diego Democrat said in a statement.

Rep. [Scott Peters](#), D-San Diego, said he would forego his usual pay during the shutdown, and placed blame on President Donald Trump and Republicans.

“This is no way to run the greatest country on earth. And this could all be resolved if Republican leadership would allow a vote on either one of the two bipartisan compromises to find a fix for Dreamers,” Peters said in a statement.

The two Republicans from the region, Rep. [Darrell Issa](#), R-Vista, and Rep. [Duncan Hunter](#), R-Alpine, did not comment on the shutdown.

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