



Congress should prevent government shutdowns

Ask: Support the Prevent Government Shutdowns Act or similar legislation.

- S. 4632/ H.R. 5870 by Sens. Lankford/Hassan, Reps. Arrington/Panetta, bipartisan cosponsors.
- Extend current funding levels while Congress finalizes appropriations bills.
- Keep Congress in session every day doing appropriations bills until it enacts them all.

The chance of shutdowns drives bad results.

- **Harmful process:** It sets up an exclusionary, tightly controlled omnibus bill where leaders and White House have the leverage. Most members vote for an omnibus to avoid a shutdown, not because it's better than current policy. Mistrust results.
- **Uncertainty:** Imminent and actual shutdowns disrupt important federal services for the American people in defense, border security, medical research and development, and much more. The risk of shutdowns imposes hidden costs on society that undermine prosperity.
- **Budget delays:** Using a holiday deadline to jam through an omnibus means waiting months beyond the start of the fiscal year. This delays the subsequent budget cycle too.
- **Spending bloat:** Omnibus bills include wasteful spending to minimize interest group complaints to sympathetic members of Congress.

Automatic continuing appropriations ("auto CR") can produce better outcomes.

- **Timely appropriations:** Not later than October versus mid-December, at best.
- **No disruptions:** Services that Americans expect continue at current levels.
- **Less waste:** Agencies, the public, and Congress need not plan for or deal with shutdowns.
- **Bottom-up solutions:** Congress shifts toward an inclusive process to develop policy, which builds trust. Many compelling reasons remain for Congress to do new appropriations each year.

- **Efficient funding:** Member engagement replaces padded accounts to pass appropriations. Shifting resources to higher priorities drives continually better results.

Federal and state experience shows that Congress should prevent shutdowns.

- **Congress never created shutdowns:** A 1980 Carter Administration opinion did. Completing appropriations bills on time has been rare ever since.
- **Auto CRs work in states:** They are comprehensive in KS, NC, WI, and RI and partial in 18 other states: AK, AZ, CA, FL, GA, ID, IL, IN, KY, ME, MN, MT, NH, OK, SD, UT, VA, and WY. Auto CRs do not delay budget bills, and all states enact their budget or appropriations bills.
- **Spending restraint:** States with auto CRs have less bloat and spend a little less per capita.
- **Wisconsin:** House Speaker Robin Vos: "I always say to legislative leaders that if you could trade away something that the executive wants in order to get that one piece of power, I think it's worth it."
- **North Carolina:** Since 2016, it helped the General Assembly prevail in conflicts with the governor.
- **Kansas:** Adopted in 2025, supported more consensus-driven budgeting in 2026.

For additional information:

- Kurt Couchman, kcouchman@afphq.org
- Will Burger, wburger@afphq.org