

THE SHUTDOWN, DAY 23: AN APOLOGY, A PROD, AND A CALL

*[NB: You know the drill. Check the byline.
/~Rayne]*

First, an apology.

The government shutdown is personal; I have a lifelong friend who works for a federal agency and I have another friend who isn't employed by the government. They are both hurting.

The first is a single woman ten years away from retirement; she's raised a son, providing most of his support over the years at the expense of saving for retirement.

The other woman co-owns a small construction company with her spouse, specializing in home repairs and remodeling. She has several kids in school right now who are nickel-and-diming her to death with fairly typical needs – like AP tests and sports fees, uniforms, and equipment, essential if a kid has been working toward a sport scholarship. (Yes, children are yet again being punished for Trump's and GOP Senate's willful intransigence.)

Friend 1 doesn't have a paycheck now. I think she'll manage through the end of the month but then what? Tap into her IRA and draw down only to face a penalty later while losing the benefit of gains on her investment? How does she juggle trying to save for retirement, paying for her medications, keeping a roof over her head and her car in good order, while not getting too stressed out and making her blood pressure worse?

Friend 2 has now lost two construction contracts this month because they were small jobs for government employees who have been forced to cancel them. Her family counted on those contracts to get them through the slowest

portion of the construction year. They don't have a lot of reserves to draw on because they have a small business they need to finance and well, kids. Children are expensive, from diapers to college application fees and textbooks. God help them if any family member gets sick.

I am so very sorry, friends and friends I haven't yet met. I can hear your stress; I know you want to work and you don't want to be forced to take desperate measures to stay afloat. I wish you didn't have to go through this wholly unnecessary and utterly unfair bullshit. I hope that writing this and other posts asking fellow voters to call their senators will help. Again, I am so very sorry.

Next, a prod.

I know many of the furloughed government employees are dealing with stressful first time experiences, like calling landlords and creditors to work out payment. Many of them feel great shame about this.

It's not you. It's not your fault. It's about us, the rest of us. It's about the Senate and Trump. Please don't take the shame on your shoulders – you have enough to bear already.

Tell your landlord and creditors openly you're a government employee or reliant on government employees. You're not alone in this and they are surely hearing it from others.

My prod to members of Congress and to their constituents: government employees need some sort of tax credit or waiver of penalty if they have to draw down from their 401K or IRAs to pay the bills. Can we get something like this submitted promptly, please? Can we get behind it?

My prod to our community: if you can afford it, make a donation to a local food pantry. Many government employees have been forced to get help for themselves and their families. Ask around for other local opportunities to help since federal employees can't take tips or other

forms of remuneration. Local union offices may be able to help direct your contributions.

Finally, a call.

Make one. Make several. Call your senators regardless of their party affiliation and tell them 1) we need the government reopened, and 2) we still don't need the "fucken wall." This shutdown is not only hurting our government employees but it is wasting our tax dollars. We have pissed away on this shutdown any money which could have been spent on increased border security.

A constituent in Illinois said Senators Duckworth and Durbin have been getting more phone calls from the build-the-wall faction than the reopen-government-no-wall faction. This is probably due to the assumption that the Democrats are going to do the right thing and vote against the wall but for reopening government; we should no longer make that assumption given how desperate things are for many furloughed workers. Call your senators first, then call your rep (House has already voted along party lines for reopening government and against the requested wall funding). Recruit friends and family members to make calls as well.

If you have a GOP senator, ask them to work with other GOP senators to remove Mitch McConnell as Senate Majority Leader because his failure to bring both bills to reopen government and wall funding aids and abets President Trump's obstruction of justice by interfering with Department of Justice and federal court operations.

It's been done before; Trent Lott was forced to resign as Senate Majority Leader. (It'd be karmic payback considering how helpful McConnell was with Lott's departure.)

Congressional switchboard: (202) 224-3121

Treat this as an open thread.