

COALITION *for* HEALTH FUNDING

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Washington, D.C.— As the partial government shutdown heads into its fourth week, Coalition for Health Funding Executive Director Emily Holubowich issued the following statement:

This government shutdown is about to become the longest in American history. Thousands of federal employees and contractors received blank paychecks today, and have no indication about when relief will come. Many of these workers are on furlough anxious to get back to work, and many are forced to continue working without pay. The uncertainty caused by the shutdown directly affects their health and well-being—forced to choose between paying for their rent, heat, gasoline, food, medicine—and puts the health and safety of all Americans at greater risk.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which is responsible for ensuring that our food, drugs, and cosmetics are safe, is currently operating with a workforce that is reduced by 40 percent. Those employees who are responsible for food inspections—which have been suspended for all except “high-risk facilities”—are working without pay. The health care and preventive services provided to tribal communities with the support of the currently unfunded Indian Health Service are being curtailed. At the Environmental Protection Agency, 13,000 staff have been furloughed, and the agency has suspended inspections of chemical factories, power plants, and water treatment operations. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) is no longer investigating and assessing environmental health threats. Food assistance provided by the Women, Infants, and Children nutrition program is at risk of running out should the shutdown drag on through January.

The harmful effects of the shutdown are significant and apparent—not just to those employees directly affected, but to all Americans. The Coalition for Health Funding urges Congress and the Administration to reopen the federal government.

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The Coalition for Health Funding is a nonprofit alliance working to preserve public health investments in the interest of all Americans. Our 90-member organizations together represent more than 100 million patients and consumers, health providers, professionals, and researchers.

<http://www.publichealthfunding.org>