



**CONSORTIUM FOR CITIZENS
WITH DISABILITIES**

The Government Shutdown is Hurting Thousands of Federal Employees with Disabilities

Tagline: Co-chairs of the Employment and Training Task Force write about the shutdown's impact on Federal employees with disabilities.

As the nation enters the fourth week of the partial government shutdown, furloughed workers face mounting bills without their paychecks. Among them are thousands of hard-working people with disabilities employed by the Federal government and contractors across the country. Because of the shutdown, these workers are being denied the chance to earn an income and achieve independence, just like anyone else.

Workers with disabilities have long had a place in the federal workforce. The government is the nation's largest employer of workers with disabilities, just as it is the largest employer of workers without disabilities and the largest employer of veterans. Since 2010<<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/executive-order-increasing-federal-employment-individuals-with-disabilities>>, the Federal government has gone to great lengths to become a more inclusive employer and to actively recruit more workers with disabilities.

According to a 2016 report<<https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/diversity-and-inclusion/reports/disability-report-fy2015.pdf>> by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) there are over 173,000 federal employees with disabilities across all different categories of disabilities. When you include veterans with service-connected disabilities, that number rises to over a quarter million employees. That means Federal employees with disabilities represent 14.41 percent of the overall workforce while fully 19 percent of veterans with service-connected disabilities work for the federal government.

It is not just Federal agencies themselves that are at the forefront of recruiting, hiring and employing workers with disabilities. Since 2015, thanks to new rules under Section 503<<https://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/section503.htm>> of the Rehabilitation Act, companies with federal contracts have had a goal of having 7 percent of their workforce be qualified employees with disabilities. These rules have spurred major corporations like JP Morgan Chase, Northrup Grumman, SAP, EY, IBM and Coca-Cola to recruit and hire more workers with disabilities.

Why does this matter? Because people with disabilities face a wide variety of barriers to employment and independence. The Census Bureau<<https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/miscellaneous/cb12-134.html>>

reports that there are over 56 million Americans with disabilities. Out of that number, there 22 million working-age people with disabilities. Despite recent job gains thanks to a growing economy, barely one-in-three people with disabilities have jobs.

That, in turn, raises the question of how many workers with disabilities are being hurt by the Shutdown. Looking at the numbers of workers with disabilities employed at departments and agencies affected by the shutdown, it is easy to see the critical place <https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/diversity-and-inclusion/reports/disability-report-fy2015.pdf> that people with disabilities have in the federal workforce. There are over 14,000 employees with disabilities at the Department of Homeland Security, around 8,000 at DOJ and a similar number at Agriculture. The Department of Transportation employs over 5,000 workers with disabilities while Commerce is also home to around 2,700 workers with disabilities. To varying degrees, all of them are being hurt by the continuing government shutdown.

In addition to federal employees being furloughed, hundreds of thousands of contractors with disabilities are also impacted. For contractors, even when the government reopens, they will probably not receive any back pay whatsoever. Among those contractors are over 2,000 employees with disabilities working in the Ability One Program with significant disabilities directly impacted by the partial shutdown.

The longer they are out of work, the financial implication can be devastating. We are deeply concerned that for many individuals, the lack of a paycheck means bills and rent will go unpaid, so they can simply feed their families. In times like this, even basic life necessities are becoming a challenge. This is an especially critical problem for contractors. When federal workers go back to work, they will likely be receiving back pay for their missed paychecks. Contractors, on the other hand, will not be paid back for their missing pay from the shutdown.

As the CCD Employment and Training Task Force http://www.c-c-d.org/rubriques.php?rub=taskforce.php&id_task=4, our organizations band together to promote opportunities for more people with disabilities to have jobs, earn an income and become independent. We work on issues of federal regulations, discuss legislative proposals to help workers with disabilities and advocate for policies which can empower thousands of people with disabilities. This shutdown, which has no end in sight, harms the very people with disabilities we want to succeed. As Congress and the President continue the fight over funding the government, we hope they will not forget about the thousands of workers with disabilities hurt by this shutdown

