

Congressional leaders are negotiating on a budget bill to keep the government running but it is possible that they will not reach an agreement before the current bill runs out at the end of this week. The government will shut down Friday April 8th, 2011 at midnight if they fail to come up with a bill that can pass Congress and that the President signs.

Though we do not have many firm answers at this point, I want all of you to have an idea of what to expect if it does come to a shutdown. My staff will continue to revise and update this page as information becomes available or changes. While I don't want all of you to worry—laws would still be enforced, emergencies responded to, and our country defended—a shutdown would have an impact on our everyday lives. That is why I continue to urge Congressional leaders to reach a budget agreement.

### **What is causing the shutdown?**

The Constitution restricts federal funds from being spent until they are appropriated—meaning that Congress has to reach an agreement by passing a budget. Though the House passed budget proposals in 2010 for the current fiscal year, they were not passed in Senate. The latest budget fiscal year began in October. We have passed several continuing resolutions—short-term budgets—to keep services running since then, but Congressional leaders have now reached an impasse. If we do not pass another of these continuing resolutions, or a budget for the rest of the year, by April 8, many government services will be forced to shut down by law.

### **What federal services are subject to a shutdown?**

In a shutdown, the federal government is restricted to services that protect the safety of human life and property. The military, air-traffic controllers, and law enforcement are examples of what fall under this rule.

Other federal agencies must cut their operations to the bare minimum.

### How might a shutdown affect you?

At this point, we don't know exactly how every government program would be affected in a shutdown. Agencies are deciding which of their services fall under these rules; however, my staff has reviewed prior shutdowns to better understand what might happen and we are talking with Congressional leaders about what we should expect if it happens this year.

**IRS**—Tax forms still need to be postmarked by Monday, April 18 (Patriots Day is not a federal holiday and Mainer's no longer send forms to Massachusetts for processing)

**Social Security**—Benefits for this crucial program do not go through the appropriations process, so they should continue being deposited in your account or mailed to your home. However, staff cuts may delay other services such as enrolling new participants or holding hearings.

**Medicare**—Benefits for this program are also exempt from the shutdown, so current participants should not notice any disruption, but new applications could be delayed.

**Veterans**—VHA hospitals such as VA Togus and Community Based Outpatient Clinics will stay open, and VBA disability compensation will be paid.

**Visas and Passports**—Prior shutdowns have kept new visa and passport applications from being processed. Embassies will remain open for services for American citizens, but will not conduct visa interviews.

**I am planning to visit Washington, DC. ☐ Will the tourist destinations in Washington, DC**

### be open?

- Unfortunately, many tourist destinations will be closed.
- The various monuments and memorials in Washington are outdoors, are not gated, and are open 24 hours a day. This should not change. However, National Park Rangers will not be on duty to give docent talks.
- The Capitol Visitor Center will be closed and all Capitol tour guides will be furloughed. Tours of the Capitol Building will not be available. However, the House and Senate Galleries will most likely remain publicly accessible whenever the House and Senate are in session.
  
- The Library of Congress will be closed; no tours will be available.
- The Smithsonian Institution will be closed. The Smithsonian includes 19 museums and galleries (most of the major museums in DC), the National Zoo, and several research facilities.
  
- The White House has not announced whether or not White House tours will continue. I recommend calling the White House tour information hotline at (202) 456-7041 to check on the status of your tour. If the hotline does not answer your questions, I recommend showing up at the White House at your appointed tour time to see if they are open.