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Furloughed Workers Get Help



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by John Christian Hopkins

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The federal shutdown is over, but there's still a lot of stress.

Furloughed federal workers missed out on two paychecks during the longest-ever government shutdown. But bills still pile up and things must get paid. But the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority wants to work with government workers caught in the political squeeze. "We want to let people know they can contact us to make arrangements for their utility bills," NTUA spokeswoman Deenise Becenti said.



NTUA bills can include water, electricity, wastewater and natural gas services. The customer service departments at all NTUA locations are prepared "on standby and ready to meet" with workers affected by the shutdown, Becenti added. "We ask that they contact us sooner rather than later," Becenti said. "We also ask that they bring proof of federal employment." Proof can be a federal ID or the letter workers received citing that they have been furloughed.

The shutdown came to an end Friday when the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives both passed a bill to re-open the government. President Donald Trump later signed the compromise legislation into law. The compromise keeps the federal government open through February 15, giving Congress and the president three weeks to reach a permanent spending bill.

The shutdown affected about 800,000 federal workers who were either furloughed or had to work without pay. (The workers will be paid retroactively.) The sticking point in the funding bill came when Trump insisted on \$5.7 billion to build a wall along the southern border. Democrats balked at that demand, and Trump refused to budge.

The compromise includes some money for border security, but not the full amount the president wanted. If no deal is reached before February 15 Trump has suggested that he may declare a national emergency and use money earmarked for other purposes to build the wall.

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