



2017-18 American Legion Auxiliary National Security Newsletter 4 – February 2018 The Shutdown Happened: How Does It Affect Our Servicemembers

Well, it happened.....again! The government shutdown is in effect as of midnight January 20. We've been here a few times over the past few years, so we have some idea what families should expect – although there are plenty of unknowns.

How will our military families be impacted? Here's what we know:

Will our service member get paid?

No. BUT if Congress is able to pass a separate bill to continue military pay, service members should receive compensation as usual. They did this in 2013 with the Pay Our Military Act.

If Congress doesn't pass a separate bill, there are several banking institutions, such as USAA, Navy Federal Credit Union, and Marine Federal Credit Union, who have been known to advance military pay to their customers during government shutdowns. Suggest to your military family and friends to contact their bank to inquire about their policies for situations like these.

If funds are tight and their financial institution doesn't provide advance pay in the event of a government shutdown, here are a few things our military servicemembers can do:

- Ask their bank if they would be willing to waive late or overdraft fees;
- Contact their creditors and let them know about your situation;
- Call their Service relief society for financial help:
 - Air Force Aid Society (AFAS)
 - Army Emergency Relief (AER)
 - Coast Guard Mutual Assistance (CGMA)
 - Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society (NMCRS)
- If you don't have an aid society, contact the Red Cross, or call 866-563-1376.

Following past shutdowns, Congress has voted to restore pay to federal employees whose compensation was temporarily stopped.

Does our service members still have to show up for work?

Yes. All military personnel are considered essential, and must report for duty during a shutdown regardless of pay.

Will the base schools, Exchange, Commissary, Child Development Center, (etc.) be closed?

Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) schools remained open during the last two government shutdowns, as did military Exchanges. Child Development Centers (CDC) also stayed open on a case-by-case basis. Check with your installation CDC to learn more.

Commissaries located in the United States closed during the 2013 government shutdown, while OCONUS commissaries remained open.

For the newly bereaved:

With a government shutdown, there is no way for the government to pay the death gratuity (\$100,000) benefit. This benefit is typically used to cover family expenses after a service member dies and funds funeral-related costs not covered by the government. The death gratuity is often viewed as "bridge money" to ensure the family has funds available before ongoing survivor benefits are put in place. During the 2013 government shutdown, the Fisher House helped bridge this gap as a contractor and provided benefits to families of the fallen.

Service members Group Life Insurance (SGLI), typically a \$400,000 benefit, will be paid to a new beneficiary. This typically takes about a week following a death.

Government-funded travel for surviving family members to attend the dignified transfer ceremony at Dover Air Force Base, unit memorials, or funerals may not be paid during the shutdown.

Funeral benefits that are typically provided by the government for active-duty deaths may not be paid either.

The Social Security Administration may not be able to process claims for new benefits, so the newly-bereaved would have to wait until after a government shutdown ends, potentially, for a new social security claim for benefits to be processed

Families choosing to inter their loved ones at national cemeteries managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may have to wait longer for burial or internment.

Arlington National Cemetery should continue to follow its set funeral schedule (which is often planned months in advance).

(Information Provided Courtesy of MJ Boice, National Military Family Association Staff Writer)

Well, I think I've given all of you plenty to think about and pass along for this month.

God bless our troops!

Yours In Service,

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