

THE SOUTH CAROLINA BLUES FEDERAL POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE



October 2021

History of Government Shutdowns

The appropriation and control of government funds is the sole responsibility of the United States Congress. Government shutdowns happen when there is a disagreement over budget allocations before the end of the current fiscal cycle. Disagreements can come from the President or either chamber of Congress. Oftentimes a continuing resolution (CR) is passed to extend funding for a set period of time to allow for continued negotiations and hopefully an agreement.

The federal budget process looks like this:

- The President submits a detailed budget request for the next fiscal year on or before the first Monday in February.
- The House and Senate budget committees propose budget resolutions that set targets for spending and tax revenue and identify any policies that will need to move through reconciliation. These are sent to the floor for a vote and differences are resolved in conference. Next fiscal year starts on October 1.
- The House and Senate appropriations committees divide the discretionary spending set forth in the budget resolution among each of their 12 subcommittees. Each subcommittee conducts hearings on the programs under its jurisdiction and votes out a bill. The full committee marks up the bill and sends it to the floor. Both chambers pass their bills and iron out the differences in conference. The House and Senate vote again, and the conference report is sent to the President for his signature or veto.
- Reconciliation occurs if Congress needs to legislate policy changes in mandatory spending or tax laws to meet the annual targets laid out in the budget resolution. The resolution requires the authorizing committees to come up with a plan and report back to the budget committees. The budget committees combine all of the authorizing plans into an omnibus package and send it to the floor for a vote. The House and Senate work out all of the differences in conference, vote again and send the final version to the President for signature or veto.

Continuing resolutions can be blocked if there are issues with the content of the resolution bill in which case a shutdown, partial or full, would be inevitable. Many federal agencies continue to operate during shutdowns while minimizing nonessential operations. President Trump signed the Government Employee Fair Treatment Act into law ensuring that employees receive retroactive pay whenever the shutdown ends. This does not include federal contract workers who are paid by private companies.

There have been 10 shutdowns involving furloughs in recent decades. One day in 1980 (Carter), one day in 1981 (Reagan), one day in 1984 (Reagan), one day in 1986 (Reagan), three days in 1990 (Bush), 5 days in 1995 (Clinton), 21 days in 1995-96 (Clinton), 16 days in 2013 (Clinton), 3 days in 2018 (Trump), 35 days in 2018-19 (Trump).

The budget process has become controversial in recent decades due to both parties using the reconciliation rules to pass difficult pieces of legislation. Normally bill passage in the Senate requires 60 of 100 Senators to vote in favor; however, the Congressional Budget Act of 1974 created an exception to this process in the case of budget reconciliation which can be passed by a simple majority.

The holdup for 2021 has been the suspension of the debt ceiling as part of the budget package. Our country will hit our debt limit on October 18.

Congress passed a continuing resolution to provide funding through December 3, 2021 and the House passed a stand-alone debt limit suspension through December 16, 2022.



Holiday Season at the White House

Halloween has been celebrated at the White House since First Lady Mamie Eisenhower decorated with faux skeletons, jack-o-lanterns, and bundles of dried corn in 1958. It has become a beloved tradition where local children and military families are often invited to trick-or-treat as performers provide entertainment. White House staffers even get to dress up. COVID-19 changed things up last year with social distancing, mask requirements, staff member gloves, and other precautions but fun was still had. Here's a look at some of the Halloween traditions throughout the years.

1963 – Caroline and John F. Kennedy showed off their costumes to President Kennedy in the Oval Office.

1977 – Amy Carter and her friends carved pumpkins while President and First Lady Carter watched.

1989 – First Lady Barbara Bush greeted trick-or-treaters outside the South Portico.

2002 – President Bush posed with trick-or-treaters for pictures.

2009 through 2017 - The Obama Administration invited children to the White House every year with the exception of 2012 when Superstorm Sandy hit the east coast. The Obama's celebrated by handing out candy to more than 2,600 children and families annually, theming the lawns, having entertainment, and dancing alongside the children.

2017 through 2021 – Costumed children of journalists and White House staffers were invited to the Oval Office in 2017 to meet President Trump where he handed out treats. President and First Lady Trump also gave out candy on the South Lawn. In 2018, Trump gave out candy bars with the presidential seal and his signature.

