

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 7, 2019

Dear Colleague,

We write to urge you to join us in voting against the motion to proceed on Tuesday evening because the Senate should vote on the House-passed Appropriations bills as its first order of business. We must restore services to the American people and address the plight of the more than 800,000 federal employees who are being denied pay and facing mounting bills. Our position is strongly backed by the unions that represent federal employees, as well as a growing chorus of grassroots organizations who agree it would be wrong for the Senate to postpone action to reopen the government while one-quarter of the federal government is shut down and hard-working public servants are not being paid.

The shutdown is now over two weeks old with no end in sight. In addition to the more than 450,000 federal employees working without pay to protect our nation, keep our air and waters secure, and patrol our borders and 380,000 furloughed workers wondering if and when their next paycheck will come, everyday Americans are feeling the pain of the government shutdown. More than 30 million small businesses lack access to federally-assisted loans, farmers preparing for the spring planting season are unable to reach Farm Service Agency support, and thousands of people trying to buy a new home with an FHA-insured mortgage are on hold indefinitely. Progress on CDBG grants is stalled, local businesses that rely on tourism from national parks are losing money every day, and the vast majority of IRS staff is furloughed, putting timely receipt of tax returns in jeopardy.

We have also seen tragic consequences from this shutdown. The Trump Administration has decided to leave some national parks open with limited staff, and three people, including a 14-year-old girl, have died in accidents since the shutdown began.

The New Democratic Majority in the House of Representatives did their job and made opening the entire government the first order of business when they passed two measures to achieve that goal. Republican Leader McConnell should immediately bring those bills to a vote in the Senate. The Republican Caucus must not be allowed to contract out their constitutional responsibilities as a separate branch of government to President Trump. They have the power to immediately schedule a vote on the House-passed bills and should make that, or another agreement to end the shutdown, the first order of business.

We also encourage you to continue to highlight the plight of federal employees trying to make ends meet, telling the stories of small business contractors and contract service workers who are being hard hit, and broadcasting the mounting harm to delivery of public services. The federal employee and contractor unions stand ready to assist your offices in developing these events around those issues.

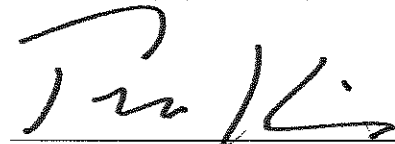
We urge you to join us — and a growing number of grassroots organizations — in taking this position. The Senate should vote on the House-passed Appropriations bills as its first order of business.

Sincerely,

  
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

  
MARK R. WARNER

  
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN

  
TIM KAINE