



October 2025

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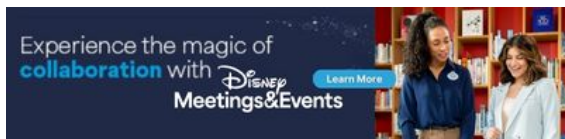
# What Event Planners Need to Know About the Government Shutdown

When the U.S. government shut down at midnight on September 30 after Congress failed to negotiate an agreement to keep the lights on, it kicked off a series of actions that will affect the meetings and events industry. Here's a look at some of the short-term impacts to expect, as well as some potential longer-term concerns should the shutdown continue.

The aftershocks of the U.S. government shutdown are just now starting to be felt outside of those now-furloughed federal workers — including those who work in the meetings, events, hospitality and [business travel industries](#). Immediately post-shutdown, we're already seeing some disruptions to travel that could affect meetings, conventions, conferences, trade shows and business travel in general, and the risks of even deeper and longer-term impacts likely will climb the longer the stalemate continues.

Among the short-term outcomes already in play are delayed travel, increased uncertainty and suspended federal event support. Should the shutdown continue, longer-term effects may include a steeper decline in an already declining international attendance, postponement of planned infrastructure upgrades that meetings and events depend on, and potentially lasting hits to growth in this usually hardy sector.

Already some government-centric shows have been cancelled due to the shutdown, including the [National Defense Transportation Association](#) and [U.S. Transportation Command's](#) fall meeting scheduled to be held in St. Louis last week. Also, expect that federal-government employees who had been scheduled to speak at or attend near-term meetings, whether held by/for the government or not, likely will not be able to make it due to being furloughed or having to stay at work to perform their duties as non-furloughed essential workers.



Other immediate short-term impacts include:

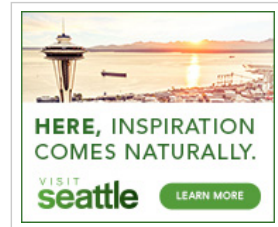
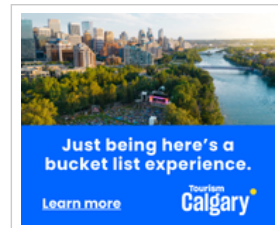
**Travel issues and logistical snags.** TSA agents and air traffic controllers are considered essential workers and so are required to remain on the job, but they are doing so without receiving a paycheck. During the last protracted government shutdown in 2018-2019, the number of air traffic controllers who started calling in sick in response to extended requirements to work without pay may have been small, but even that small number made a big impact, throwing some of the Eastern U.S.'s major airports [into disarray](#). TSA agents followed a similar path last time, with up to 10% of them not showing up for work as the shutdown dragged on for five weeks, causing security lines to

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get longer and slower than normal. If the shutdown persists as long or longer than it did back then, expect longer security lines, flight delays and potential cancellations due to unscheduled employee absences. This has already led airlines to [warn of strain and slower service](#) at airports.

Overall, the U.S. Travel Association estimates that the business travel sector, along with the traveling public in general, could face [losses of about \\$1 billion per week](#) from shutdown-related disruptions.

“This shutdown is doing real, irreversible damage,” said Geoff Freeman, President and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. “Travelers are facing longer TSA lines and flight delays. Airports are reducing flights and we’ve seen entire control towers go dark. The longer this drags on, the worse the cascade of damage will be — for local communities, for small businesses and for the country.”

U.S. Travel is tracking the ongoing economic fallout through its [real time cost ticker](#), which crossed the \$1 billion mark last Wednesday

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MeetingMentor, is a business journal for senior meeting planners that is distributed in print and digital editions to the clients, prospects, and associates of ConferenceDirect, which handles over 13,000 worldwide meetings, conventions, and incentives annually.  
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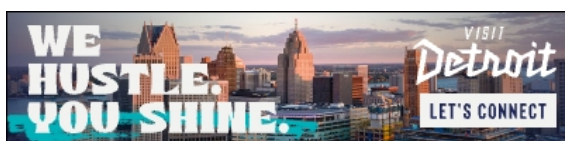
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**Federal event participation and support.** Federal agency employees are unable to participate in or support conferences, trade shows and meetings, including virtual events. Key programs like the Trade Event Partnership Program (TEPP), which brings international buyers to U.S. trade shows, [are paused due to furloughs](#) in federal departments. The situation will only continue to deteriorate, with on-the-ground support for events and buyer-delegation assistance for upcoming shows continuing to dwindle should the shutdown linger.

**International visa assistance.** The good news is that embassy and consulate visa processing is funded by applicant fees, so both should remain operational in the short term. However, a prolonged shutdown could halt normal non-emergency services, meaning that visa interview appointments could be [delayed or cancelled](#). This means that many international exhibitors and attendees, especially those from countries that already have long wait times, may have a harder time getting their paperwork completed in time to participate in 2026 meetings and events.

**Venue and park availability.** While you likely aren’t scheduled to hold an event in a national park, they can be key pieces of incentive programming. Also, federally funded museums are popular venues for off-site receptions and networking events. Many of these parks and venues have been shuttered as a result of the shutdown, meaning that offsite meetings and incentive travel programs that rely on these locations may find themselves having to scramble to find and book new off-site venues and incentive activities.



While all these issues risk worsening the longer the shutdown continues, other challenges could come into play during a longer-term shutdown. For example, funding lapses for travel infrastructure will slow modernization efforts, delay public venue maintenance, and stall federally supported research and infrastructure projects — potentially including [convention center upgrades](#) that receive federal funding. And the hits to business — which the Congressional Budget Office estimated cost the U.S. economy about \$11 billion last time around — not only affect the meetings and events industries directly, but also indirectly as their attendees, exhibitors and sponsors start feeling the pinch turn into a bite over time.

Long story short, while the industry faces real disruption even for a short-term shutdown, the longer it endures, the higher the risk for attendance, logistics, economic impact, and the continued growth

of this important sector of the economy that was just finally bouncing back to near normal after the pandemic.

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