

Would the mail be delivered? Would post offices be open?

According to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, the U.S. Postal Service would continue mail delivery, retail service, and other operations in the event of a government shutdown. The Postal Service is essentially funded through the sale of postage.

How would a potential shutdown affect Indian Affairs? How would affect services on Reservations?

According to staff at the House Committee on Natural Resources, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) manages or supervises many of the day-to-day affairs of Indian Reservations, particularly the large land-based tribes west of the Mississippi. They are under the assumption that if money were cut off to the BIA they expect “critical” services relating to law enforcement (i.e., BIA police), Indian Health Services relating to life and limb, resource protection will continue. But other operations, such as reviewing and approving a lease of Indian or tribal land to building a house, to sending a check to an Indian, to providing day care, running some dams and irrigation projects, drilling oil and gas, running Indian school operations would shut down. Non-essential personnel, such as a receptionist in a health clinic, might be furloughed. They are under the impression that essential personnel (i.e. doctors, etc) must work. Also, under a certain law, many tribes throughout the U.S. effectively bypass the BIA and receive appropriated money directly – they then provide services through tribal structures rather than through the BIA bureaucracy. Unless the tribes have amassed some reserves, their funding would cease. While well over a hundred tribes operate casinos, not all provide large profits. Most of them receive federal dollars.

Would National Parks and Museums (Smithsonian) be shut down?

According to the House Committee on Natural Resources, parks would be closed to public use. “Critical” personnel would be kept in place for resource protection (and to tell people that arrive that they are closed). The National Park Service has informed the Natural Resources Committee that they do not expect to close access to open-entrance park land, such as the National Mall and the GW Parkway. According to CRS Report RL34680, while not indicative of future behavior, 368 National Park Service sites (loss of 7 million visitors) reportedly occurred in a previous shutdown.