



COALITION ON HUMAN NEEDS

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House Repeatedly Attempts to End Government Shutdown; Omnibus Package Proposed

The partial government shutdown has entered its second month with no clear end in sight, as the fight over billions of dollars for President Trump’s border wall continues. President Trump has said that he would veto a bill that did not provide \$5.7 billion for a border wall and other border security measures, while Democrats in Congress oppose that amount. Some 800,000 federal workers remained either furloughed or working without pay, and the [effects of the shutdown](#) are being felt by millions more.

President Trump’s Jan. 19th televised statement reiterated his \$5.7 billion demand, and added that he would agree to 3-year extensions of legal protections for those currently in the DACA program (Deferred

Action for Childhood Arrivals) and for immigrants from Haiti, Central American countries, and elsewhere facing deportation because the Administration has terminated their Temporary Protected Status (TPS). The President's offer has been rejected by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) and Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) at least in part because the extensions of legal status for DACA and TPS are too narrow (not going substantially beyond the protections now being provided by court rulings) and too much continues to be demanded for the wall.

The House of Representatives has passed several packages that would reopen the government, including passing Senate versions of four of the seven spending bills that have not yet been signed into law. But Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has so far refused to bring up any of the House bills in the Senate. Although he initially said he wouldn't bring up any measures that don't have President Trump's and the Democratic leaders' approval, he has now pivoted to say he'll take the President's proposal to the floor even though it has been opposed by the Democratic leaders. The Senate is expected to take up this week a measure that would combine the President's proposal with a six-bill package similar to a House-backed package (described below) that would reopen and fund the rest of the government through the rest of the fiscal year.

Also this week, the House is expected to pass a stopgap measure, also known as a Continuing Resolution (CR), to reopen and fund all government operations through Feb. 28, without additional money for President Trump's border wall. The bill is expected to pass along party lines and die in the Senate.

In addition, the House is expected to pass a six-bill "omnibus" spending package ([H.R. 648](#)) that combines compromise bills drafted last year by House and Senate Democratic and Republican negotiators. This package would reopen all government agencies currently affected by the shutdown (the Departments of Housing and Urban Development, Transportation, Homeland Security, Agriculture, and others), except the Department of Homeland Security, which would control funding for a border wall.

While the President's offer is expected to come up in the Senate this week (and fail for lack of 60 votes), the omnibus package in the House is considered to be close to what may eventually become law once the shutdown ends. Key components of the package for the human needs community include:

- An extension through Sept. 30, 2020 of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides cash assistance and help in moving from welfare to work for low-income families with children. The House on Jan. 15 passed by voice vote separate legislation to extend the authorization for TANF through June 30. State TANF programs are now using unspent federal dollars and the funds states must put up, but some are starting to run out of funds. The next installment of federal funds cannot go out until the program is extended. The National Governors Association sent a [letter to Congress](#) on January 19 calling for reauthorization of TANF.
- An avoidance of any automatic cuts to Medicare and other benefits programs that could be triggered after the shutdown ends by the statutory pay-as-you-go rule.

- A 4 percent increase in funding for the Department of Housing and Urban Development over FY18 levels, to \$44.2 billion. The Tenant-Based Rental Assistance program is funded at \$20.3 billion, adequate to renew all existing vouchers. Housing Programs are funded at \$12.7 billion, an increase of \$173 million above the FY18 enacted level and \$726 million above the President's budget request. The Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes is funded at \$279 million, an increase of \$49 million above the FY18 enacted level and \$134 million above the President's budget request.
- \$6.1 billion in FY19 funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), a decrease of \$100 million from FY18 levels and \$325 million above President Trump's request. Full FY19 funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamps) and Child Nutrition Programs is also included.
- A small increase of \$17 million for the Environmental Protection Agency over FY18 levels, to \$8.8 billion. The package contains some contentious policy changes, known as riders, that advocates oppose, while eliminating others that were contained in the version of the bill that previously passed the House.
- A total of \$3.82 billion, an increase of more than \$1 billion above FY18 and \$20.9 million above the President's budget request, to enable the Census Bureau to prepare for the 2020 Decennial Census.
- \$497.5 million for Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs. VAWA expired on Dec. 21 with the start of the shutdown.
- \$415 million for the Legal Services Corporation, which is \$5 million above the FY18 enacted level. The President had proposed completely eliminating this program, which helps provide legal assistance to underserved communities.

A summary of the omnibus by division from the House Appropriations Committee Majority Staff is available [here](#). Congress and the President have already enacted [legislation](#) guaranteeing that furloughed federal workers and those working without pay will receive back pay once the shutdown ends. For more information on the effects of the government shutdown, see CHN's [Trump Shutdown Resources page](#) as well as our blog, [Voices for Human Needs](#).

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Disaster Aid for Puerto Rico Passed in House; Administration Deems "Unnecessary"

In an earlier attempt to reopen the government and provide much-needed disaster relief, the House on Jan. 16 passed ([237-187](#)) a bill that included stopgap funding for closed federal agencies through Feb. 8 and more than \$14 billion in aid to victims of hurricanes, wildfires, typhoons, and volcanoes across the U.S. and its territories in 2018. Included was \$600 million in disaster aid for Puerto Rico's Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP), which the Trump Administration [called](#) "excessive and unnecessary" in its official [Statement of Administration Policy](#). In addition, President Trump [reportedly](#)

told Administration officials last fall that he “did not want a single dollar going to Puerto Rico, because he thought the island was misusing the money...” Congress had appropriated.

In response, Enrique Fernández-Toledo, director of the Puerto Rico Relief and Economic Policy Initiative at the Center for American Progress, said in a [statement](#), “NAP disaster supplemental funding is set to [run out of money](#) in March, leaving more than 1.3 million Puerto Rican families to face benefit cuts and 100,000 more families without NAP benefits for the remaining six months of fiscal year 2019. We cannot let Puerto Rican families who continue to suffer from unemployment and food insecurity following hurricanes Irma and Maria fall through the cracks.”

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Many More Migrant Children Separated from Families than Originally Thought

While the battle over funding for a border wall continues in Washington, a government watchdog report released on Jan. 17 found that the Trump Administration likely separated thousands more migrant children from their parents at the U.S. border than has previously been made public, but federal efforts to track those children have been so poor that the precise number is unknown. The [revelations](#) by the Inspector General of the Department of Health and Human Services drew concern and outrage from immigrant advocates, and members of the U.S. House immediately promised to step up oversight efforts.

“Today’s report sheds horrifying new light on the Trump Administration’s massive effort to tear apart migrant families,” said U.S. Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), incoming chairwoman of the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee. “It reveals heartlessness and carelessness on a level even beyond what we had known. Not only did this Administration take thousands more children away from their parents – it failed to keep information about the total number and current status of children separated from their parents or guardians. That’s unconscionable and inexcusable.”

“It is clear the Department of Health and Human Services did not have a clue as to how to reunite the children they were cruelly separating at President Trump’s insistence,” added U.S. Rep. Rosa DeLauro (D-CT), incoming chair of the House Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Subcommittee. “They cannot even tell us how many children they separated. This is government-sanctioned child abuse, and the whole ordeal is a stain on our nation and our values. I refuse to let the Trump Administration get away with this without conducting vigorous Congressional oversight.”

The Inspector General’s report found that no one systematically kept count of children separated from their parents until a lawsuit last spring triggered by the Trump Administration’s “zero tolerance” policy, under which the government tried to criminally prosecute all parents who crossed the border illegally, taking their children from them in the process. As a result of the lawsuit, the government identified about 2,700 separated children in federal custody as of June 2018, some of them infants and toddlers. But HHS officials say there was a sharp spike in separated children starting a year earlier, shortly after

Trump took office, according to the Inspector General's report. Investigators now say thousands more children were taken from their parents or other guardians by border or immigration agents during that time and later released.

The ACLU, which sued the government over the separations, [said](#) the report "reaffirms that the government never had a clear picture of how many children it ripped from their parents. We will be back in court over this latest revelation."

Meanwhile, [officials have announced](#) that the government has "effectively closed" a tent city in Tornillo, Texas, that has housed some 2,800 migrant teenagers. However, plans are now underway in Homestead, Florida to nearly double the capacity of a similar, unregulated center for migrant teens. The "temporary shelter" this month will increase its capacity from 1,350 to 2,350 beds, according to HHS officials.

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Advocates Applaud Ruling Blocking Citizenship Question on 2020 Census

Civil rights and census advocates applauded a Jan. 15 decision by a federal judge that blocked the Trump Administration from including a question about citizenship status on the 2020 Census. The judge [ruled](#) that by adding the question to the decennial count, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross had violated the Administrative Procedures Act in ignoring harmful implications for Hispanic and noncitizen households. The ruling is expected to be appealed.

In a [statement](#), Vanita Gupta, President and CEO of The Leadership Conference Education Fund, said, "Today's decision vindicates what we know: the addition of the citizenship question was based, in Judge Furman's own words, on 'acts and statements of officials with something to hide' and should be removed.... Congress must now step in to remove the question and lift any cloud of uncertainty that will hang over final census preparations if the issue remains tied up in the courts."

In addition to the case ruled on last week, the Administration is fighting five more lawsuits across the country filed by dozens of states, cities and other groups that want the question removed. A second trial over the question began earlier this month in California, and another is scheduled to begin in Maryland on Jan. 22.

For more information on the importance of a fair and accurate 2020 Census, see CHN's [Census page](#), and [register](#) for a webinar on Jan. 23 at 3pm ET held by CHN and the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights.

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For the People Act Introduced to Reform Elections and Curtail Corruption

Advocates from across the human needs community, including many members of CHN, [endorsed](#) the introduction of H.R. 1, the For the People Act, earlier in January. According to the House Democracy Reform Task Force, chaired by Rep. John Sarbanes (D-MD), [H.R. 1](#) will “make it easier, not harder, to vote; end the dominance of big money in our politics, and ensure public officials work for the public interest.” Specifically, the bill would create automatic voter registration across the country, ensure that individuals who have completed felony sentences have their full rights restored, end partisan gerrymandering, and make Election Day a federal holiday. The legislation also requires all organizations involved in political activity to disclose their large donors, requires presidents to disclose their tax returns, and creates a code of ethics for the Supreme Court.

[Vox](#) called the bill “sweeping anti-corruption measures aimed at stamping out the influence of money in politics and expanding voting rights.” However, in an [op-ed](#) opposing the legislation, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) said the bill is Democrats’ attempt to “grow the federal government’s power over Americans’ political speech and elections.” The bill is expected to pass the House sometime in the next few months, but McConnell has [reportedly](#) already stated, “That’s not going to go anywhere.”

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\$15 Minimum Wage Bill Would Lift Pay for 41 Million Workers

On Jan. 16, members of Congress introduced legislation that would more than double the federal minimum wage, raising it gradually from \$7.25 per hour to \$15 per hour by 2024. The [Raise the Wage Act of 2019](#) would also phase out the subminimum wage for tipped workers and sunset the subminimum wage for workers with disabilities and workers under the age of 20. After 2024, the bill would require the minimum wage to rise automatically to keep pace with inflation.

According to the [Economic Policy Institute](#), the legislation would lift pay for 41 million workers – nearly 30 percent of the U.S. workforce. It would generate \$144 billion in higher wages for workers, which would begin to reverse decades of growing pay inequality and help stimulate the economy.

Christine Owens, Executive Director of the National Employment Law Project, said in a [statement](#), “The federal minimum wage is supposed to provide a meaningful standard to ensure that workers everywhere in the country are paid at least an adequate [wage](#) to meet their basic needs. But with the federal minimum wage stuck for 10 years at a poverty-level \$7.25 an hour, it’s falling far short in that regard. Instead, it’s being used to suppress workers’ wages.”

The last time Congress raised the federal hourly minimum wage was in 2007. Twenty-one states currently follow the federal minimum wage, and in 17 of those states, lawmakers have enacted preemption laws prohibiting cities and counties from adopting higher minimum wages. Polls show

nearly [three-quarters](#) of voters support an increase, though there's disagreement over the exact amount. Young voters have [indicated](#) the minimum wage is a driving issue for them in voting.

The Coalition on Human Needs joined more than 350 organizations in signing a [letter of support](#) for the Raise the Wage Act.

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We appreciate your input. Give us your thoughts on our *Human Needs Report* at limbery@chn.org.
