

Furloughed Federal Employees Will Receive Back Pay

The president today signed into law a bill that guarantees back pay for furloughed federal employees once the partial shutdown ends.

NTEU strongly supported the 2019 Government Employee Fair Treatment Act, which requires that agencies make all employees—furloughed and those who worked—whole "at the earliest date possible after the lapse in appropriations ends," regardless of the next regularly scheduled pay period.

The bill also allows those who are required to work during a shutdown to use their annual leave and sick leave while the government remains closed. OPM must issue regulations before this provision becomes effective.

Passage of this legislation was a top priority for NTEU so that no federal employee was permanently denied pay because of a shutdown they did not cause.

Lawmaker Urges Help for Employees Seeking Unemployment Insurance

While federal employees will receive back pay when the government reopens, many are struggling financially today and need more immediate relief. NTEU is commending a lawmaker who recognizes the devastating impact of the shutdown on federal employees and their families.

Rep. Richard Neal (D-Mass.), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, is asking Labor Secretary Alexander Acosta to make sure furloughed federal workers, and those working without pay, can receive unemployment insurance benefits. In a [letter](#) sent yesterday, Neal asked Acosta to issue guidance, similar to the 2013 shutdown, so that state workforce agencies can start helping federal employees as soon as possible.

States should be allowed to waive certain requirements, including that federal employees must actively search for another job while collecting unemployment benefits, he wrote.

Helpful Information

NTEU has been getting questions from members, so here are some of the most frequent questions and answers.

Are agencies required to apply RIF procedures if the furlough last more than 30 days?

No. There are two types of furloughs: administrative and lapse in appropriations. We are in a lapse in appropriations furlough. At the end of your 30-day furlough notice, you will receive a second furlough notice. Administrative furloughs have a definite duration, unlike lapse in appropriations furloughs, and are taken based of lack of funds or work. OPM's regulations require that agencies use RIF procedures for administrative furloughs lasting more than 30 days.

I put in for retirement and my last day is in the middle of this furlough. Am I retired?

According to OPM, the answer is yes. As long as you had submitted notice of your desire to retire your agency should, when the shutdown ends, honor that date. Formal paperwork may be completed when the agency reopens.

Does my health insurance continue?

Yes. If you are under FEHBP, your coverage continues. Premiums will accumulate and be withheld from your paycheck when the shutdown ends.

What about dental and vision premiums under FEDVIP?

Since we are nearing a second missed paycheck for many employees, this is something to pay attention to. If you do not receive pay for two consecutive pay periods, BENEFEDS will begin to bill you directly for premium payments. You must pay those bills on a timely basis in order to continue your coverage.

I have other pay and benefit questions.

OPM has information on other pay and benefit questions you may have. Visit the [Furlough Guidance](#) page.

Reminder

NTEU's [Shutdown page](#) has resources including creditor letters, SF-8 forms, information on unemployment, guidance from TSP and more. Be sure to check that out on a regular basis.