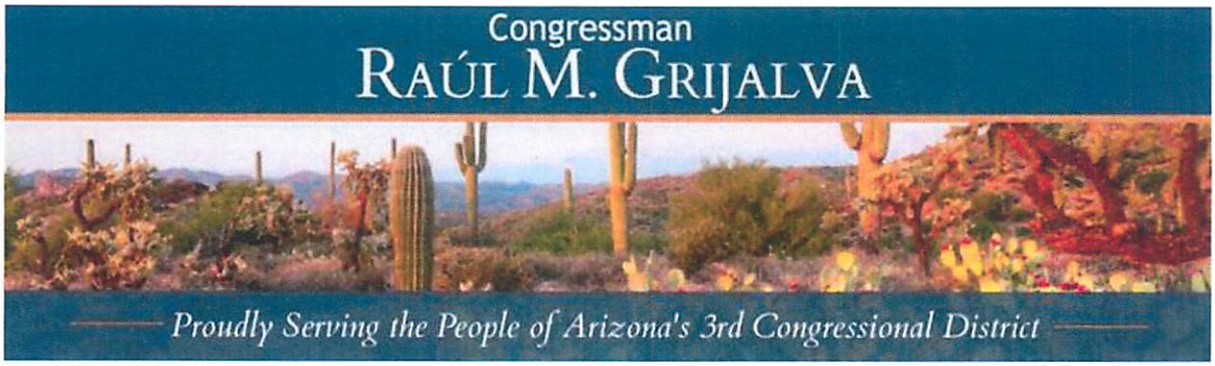

- Resources for Furloughed Federal Employees -

CONGRESSMAN GRIJALVA CALLS ON TRUMP TO END SHUTDOWN – PRESS RELEASE

OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT - Guidance for Shutdown Furloughs (LINK)

https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/guidance-for-shutdown-furloughs.pdf

SHUT-DOWN OF FEDERAL OPERATIONS—WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME? (INCLUDED)

https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/unemployment-compensation-for-federal-employees-fact-sheet-december-2018.pdf

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS DURING A LAPSE IN APPROPRIATIONS (LINK)

https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Frequently-Asked-Questions-During-a-Lapse-in-Appropriations.pdf

UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES - INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES (LINK)

HTTPS://OWS.DOLETA.GOV/UNEMPLOY/PDF/UCFE.PDF

INFORMATION FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES (INCLUDED)

HTTPS://WWW.OPM.GOV/POLICY-DATA-OVERSIGHT/PAY-LEAVE/FURLOUGH-GUIDANCE/UNEMPLOYMENT-COMPENSATION-FOR-FEDERAL-EMPLOYEES-FREQUENTLY-ASKED-QUESTIONS-FOR-FEDERAL-AGENCIES-DECEMBER-2018.PDF

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI) - QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS (INCLUDED)

https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/ucfe-claims-q-and-a-for-opms-website.pdf

AZ UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE CALL CENTER TELEPHONE NUMBERS: (INFO)

Toll Free: 1 (877) 600-2722
Phoenix: (602) 364-2722
Tucson: (520) 791-2722
TDD (Telecommunications Device for the Deaf): 1 (877) 877-6226 Toll-Free

SAMPLE LETTERS FOR FURLOUGHED EMPLOYEES' CREDITORS (INCLUDED)

NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMITTEE DEMOCRATS
RAÚL M. GRIJALVA

January 10, 2019

Media Contact: Adam Sarvana
(202) 225-6065 or (202) 578-6626 mobile

Chairman Grijalva Calls On Trump To End Shutdown, Asks American Public To Share Trump Shutdown Stories

Washington, D.C. – Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva today launched a new online tool for Americans to share personal stories of how ongoing government shutdown is impacting their lives. The online platform will enable people across the country to take action and share their experiences of being furloughed, forced to work without pay, turned away from visiting public lands, and how the shutdown has affected them and their communities.

Grijalva called on President Trump to end the shutdown, now entering its 20th day.

"President Trump's government shutdown is hurting Americans and it has to end now," said Chairman Grijalva. "The stories of what this manufactured crisis is doing to real people need to be told, and they need to be heard by the president and his supporters. I've already been hearing from families suffering because of the president's inability to lead the country. It's time end this madness and reopen the government."

The shutdown will force more than 800,000 federal workers to go without a paycheck this week. Grijalva called on the president and Republican congressional leaders to remember that these are real people with real bills and real families to provide for.

Americans can share their Trump shutdown stories at http://naturalresources.house.gov/trump-shutdown-stories. Follow the conversation at #MyShutdownStory.

SHUT-DOWN OF FEDERAL OPERATIONS—WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ME?

In the event of a Federal government shutdown, Federal employees may be eligible for Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE). The UCFE program is administered by state unemployment insurance (UI) agencies acting as agents of the Federal government. The program is operated under the same terms and conditions that apply to regular state UI. In general, the law of the state in which an individual's official duty station in Federal civilian service is located will be the state law under which an individual's eligibility for benefits is determined.

What is a shut-down?

Every year Congress appropriates funds for Federal Agencies to operate in each fiscal year. In the absence of either a signed appropriations or a Continuing Resolution, Federal Agencies must "shut-down" (that is, cease normal spending).

Which federal employees are affected?

When there is a "shut-down" not all government operations cease. Expectations generally provide for continuation of activities involving national defense, law enforcement, and other activities directly involved with the protection of life and property. In addition, employees not paid from appropriated funds, and those "excepted" to administer shut-down operations, will continue to work.

Pay Status

During a government shut-down, employees who are not required to work under one of the exceptions above may not even volunteer their services. Employees not required to work are "furloughed," that is, placed in a non-pay, non-duty status, until the shut-down ends.

Will "excepted" employees get paid?

Employees designated "excepted" who continue to work during the shut-down will almost certainly be paid for this period. However, this requires specific Congressional approval and that has occurred in the past.

Am I eligible for unemployment benefits?

State UI laws regarding eligibility vary. You may apply on or after the first day you are furloughed. The state where you file your claim will determine your eligibility. In general, furloughed employees should be eligible as long as all other state eligibility factors are met.

How do I file an unemployment claim?

You need to contact the state where you worked to file a claim. To find contact information for your state, please visit the following website: http://www.servicelocator.org/. Employees may be asked to provide proof of wages such as an earnings and leave statement, or Form SF-50 and may also be asked to provide a Form SF-8.

What is the weekly amount of UCFE benefits paid, and how long do benefits last?

Most states pay a maximum of 26 weeks of regular benefits; the maximum weekly benefit amount of UCFE is based on the state law; the amounts will vary.

How soon will benefits begin to be paid?

Some states require individuals to serve a waiting week, which means that the first week after a claim is filed is an unpaid week. In general, most states will issue payments to eligible individuals within 14-21 days after the claim is filed.

What will happen if Federal employees are paid for time during the shutdown period?

Should an appropriation or continuing resolution occur that retroactively provides for the payment of salary, state and Federal UI laws governing benefit overpayments will need to be applied to those weeks in which benefits were paid.

INFORMATION FOR FEDERAL AGENCIES
UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES (UCFE)

In the event of a Federal government shutdown, Federal employees may be eligible for UCFE. The UCFE program is administered by state unemployment insurance (UI) agencies acting as agents of the Federal government. The program is operated under the same terms and conditions that apply to regular state UI. In general, the law of the state in which an individual's official duty station in Federal civilian service is located will be the state law under which an individual's eligibility for benefits is determined.

How will Federal agencies know when an employee files a claim for UCFE?

The state UI agency will notify the appropriate Federal agency when a claim has been filed. A notice, Form 931, *Request for Wage and Separation Information,* will be sent to the Federal agency advising that a claim was filed. **A response is due from the Federal agency within 12 days.** Most states take claims either over the phone or the Internet. To find out how a particular state takes claims, visit this website: http://www.servicelocator.org/OWSLinks.asp.

How long do UCFE benefits last?

In most states, the maximum number of weeks available for regular benefits is 26 weeks.

What is the weekly amount of UCFE benefits paid?

The maximum weekly benefit amount of UCFE is based on the state law; the amounts will vary.

How soon will benefits begin to be paid?

Some states require individuals to serve a waiting week, which means that the first week after a claim is filed is an unpaid week. In general, most states will issue payments to eligible individuals within 14-21 days after the claim is filed.

What will happen if Federal employees are paid for time during the shutdown period?

Should an appropriation or continuing resolution occur that retroactively provides for the payment of salary, state and Federal laws governing UI overpayments will need to be applied to weeks paid.

What if an employee is only out of work for a couple of days during a single week?

State UI laws provide for the payment of partial weekly amounts when individuals are employed less than full-time during a week. State UI laws vary as to the number of hours and/or days individuals must be in non-employment status during a week in order to be eligible for a partial payment of UCFE. In most cases, individuals on furlough status for only a couple of days during a week would not be eligible for a partial payment for that week.

Will all employees affected by the shutdown be eligible for UCFE benefits?

It depends. To qualify for UCFE individuals must meet the eligibility requirements of the state UI law where the UCFE claim is filed.

Does the Federal agency get billed for UCFE benefits?

Yes. Federal agencies are billed on a quarterly basis for UCFE benefits paid during the applicable calendar quarter. The U.S. Department of Labor is responsible for sending UCFE bills to Federal agencies based on information provided by the individual states regarding payments made to eligible individuals.

What Federal Identification Code (FIC) should employees use when filing for UCFE benefits?

State agencies should have a listing of all Federal agency FICs. However, a listing of all FICs can also be found at: https://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/pay-leave/furlough-guidance/#url=Unemployment-Insurance-Resources.

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE (UI)
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Note: The responses below provide general information. To obtain State UI specific information, please contact the State UI agency directly or review the UI requirements on the State website (go to https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/service-locator.aspx) and enter the State where you collected your UI benefits).

Retroactive Payment of Wages

Question: Are Federal employees required to repay the unemployment benefits received when/if wages are paid retroactively for the time that they were not working during the Government shutdown?

Answer: In most States, including the District of Columbia, employees who receive unemployment benefits and also later receive a retroactive payment from their employer for the same time period, will be required to repay the UI benefits received.

The State UI agency determines whether or not an overpayment exists and, generally, the recovery of the overpayment is a matter for State action under its law; however, some State UI laws require the employer to recover such overpayment.

Question: Can an employee's wages be garnished if there is an overpayment of benefits?

Answer: Yes, if the State law has provisions for wage garnishments. However, employees will be given the opportunity to voluntarily repay the overpayment first before the State proceeds with any garnishments.

Question: If I am overpaid benefits, will I be required to repay the entire amount all at once?

Answer: It depends on the State requirements; most States will allow an individual to set up a repayment agreement to satisfy the overpayment.

Cancellation of UI Claim

Question: Is it possible to cancel my UI claim if the Government shutdown ends?

Answer: It depends on the State UI law and the status of your claim. Most States will not allow cancellation of a UI claim if the (weekly/bi-weekly) continued claim certification was made and/or any benefit payment(s) were issued.

Question: I have not yet received any UI payments; how can I find out the status of my claim?

Answer: You will need to contact the State UI agency where you filed your claim.

For further information on the procedural requirements for taking furlough actions and the rights and entitlements which accrue to employees in a furlough status, agency human resources specialists may contact the following OPM offices. **(Please note that these contacts may not be available during a furlough that affects OPM.)** Employees must contact their agency human resources office for information.

Contact Information by Topic

Documentation of Furlough Actions
202-606-4415*
persdoc@opm.gov
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Office of the Chief Information Officer
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415

Furloughing SES Appointees
202-606-8046
sespolicy@opm.gov
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
ES/SESPM/ERPM
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415

Furloughs Under 5 CFR Part 752 (Adverse Actions)
202-606-2930
awr@opm.gov
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Accountability and Workforce Relations, Employee Services
1900 E Street, NW Suite 7H28
Washington, DC 20415

Labor Relations
202-606-2930
awr@opm.gov
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Accountability and Workforce Relations, Employee Services
1900 E Street, NW Suite 7H28
Washington, DC 20415

Pay and Leave
202-606-2858
pay-leave-policy@opm.gov
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Pay and Leave, Employee Services
1900 E Street, NW Room 7H31
Washington, DC 20415

Performance Management
202-606-2720
performance-management@opm.gov
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
ES/SESPM/ERPM
1900 E Street NW
Washington, DC 20415

Reduction in Force, Details, and Outside Employment
202-606-0960
employ@opm.gov
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
Employee Services
Recruitment and Hiring, Hiring Policy
1900 E Street, NW Room 6500
Washington, DC 20415

Retirement, Health Benefits, and Life Insurance
Contact the Retirement Counselor or Insurance Officer for your agency. (List of Agency Benefits Officers.) Benefits officers may contact OPM's Benefits Officers Training and Development at the appropriate phone number or email address below.

Benefits Officers Training and Development (Retirement Inquiries)
202-606-0788
benefits@opm.gov
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415

Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Program
202-606-1413
fegli@opm.gov
1900 E Street NW, Room 3420
Washington, DC 20415

Federal Employees Health Benefits Program
202-606-1000
fehb@opm.gov
1900 E Street, NW Room 3420
Washington, DC 20415

Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program
202-606-1413
ltc@opm.gov
1900 E Street NW, Room 3420
Washington, DC 20415

Flexible Spending Accounts for Federal Employees
202-606-1413
fsa@opm.gov
1900 E Street NW, Room 3420
Washington, DC 20415

Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program
202-606-1413
fedvip@opm.gov (Claims Issues)
1900 E Street, NW Room 3420
Washington, DC 20415

* Hearing impaired users may utilize the Federal Relay Service (external link) by dialing 1-800-877-8339** to reach a Communications Assistant (CA). The CA will dial the requested number and relay the conversation between a standard (voice) telephone user and text telephone (TTY) user.

SAMPLE LETTERS

Following are sample letters that you may use as a guide when working with your creditors. OPM is not able to provide legal advice to individual employees.

Things to consider:

- Speak with your landlord, mortgage company, or creditor first before you write a letter. Just sending a letter may not be very effective as it will take a fair amount of time to get to the individual who needs to see it, if at all. Speaking with your creditors will enable you to work out the details of any payment plan that you can later confirm with your letter.

- Be sure to send the letter directly to the person to whom you have spoken to confirm your request for a reduced payment plan.

- Make sure that you have all the necessary information in your letter including account number, address of the property, and a telephone number where you can be reached.

- Be sure to keep a copy of the letter. In some situations, you may want to send the letter by certified mail. You may also want to fax the letter to the company.

Sample Letter to Creditor

Dear (Name of Company or individual with whom you have spoken)

This is to confirm our conversation of (date) in which we discussed a temporary reduction in my monthly payment.

As we discussed, I am a Federal employee who has recently been furloughed due to a lack of funding of my agency. Because of this, my income has been severely cut and I am unable to pay the entire cost of my monthly payments, along with my other expenses.

As we had agreed in our conversation, I will be able to make regular payments in the amount of $_____. I realize that I will be responsible to pay the remainder of the payments and, when I return to work, I will contact you immediately to work out a plan to take care of the reduced payments. I will also keep in touch with you to keep you informed about my income status.

I appreciate your willingness to work with me and your understanding during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

(Name)

_____

Account Number

_____

Address

_____

Telephone Number

Sample Letter to Mortgage Company

Dear (Name of Company or individual with whom you have spoken)

This is to confirm our conversation of (date) in which we discussed a temporary reduction in my mortgage payment.

As we discussed, I am a Federal employee who has recently been furloughed due to a lack of funding of my agency. Because of this, my income has been severely cut and I am unable to pay the entire cost of my mortgage, along with my other expenses.

As we had agreed in our conversation, I will be able to make regular payments in the amount of $_____. I realize that I will be responsible to pay the remainder of the payments and, when I return to work, I will contact you immediately to work out a plan to take care of the reduced payments. I will also keep in touch with you to keep you informed about my income status.

I appreciate your willingness to work with me and your understanding during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

(Name)

_____
Account Number

_____
Address

_____
Telephone Number