July 20, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Hearing on "Funding Lapses: Analyzing Shutdown Reform," July 22, 2026

Dear Chairman Cole and Ranking Member DeLauro:

On behalf of Bipartisan Policy Center Action, thank you for holding this hearing on shutdown reform. BPC Action commends the committee for examining how Congress can prevent the funding lapses that have become an all-too-familiar feature of the federal budget process, and we write to express our strong support for the *Prevent Government Shutdowns Act (H.R.5870/S.4632)*.

The case for reform is clear: There have been 17 government shutdowns since 1980, and the two most recent were among the most disruptive on record.[1] The fall 2025 lapse became the longest shutdown ever to affect every agency funded by annual appropriations, and in early 2026, a lapse in Department of Homeland Security funding ran a record 75 days.[2] These episodes carried real costs. Hundreds of thousands of federal employees were furloughed or required to work without pay, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits relied on by tens of millions of Americans were disrupted, Head Start classrooms closed, and more than 1,000 Transportation Security Administration officers left their jobs during the DHS lapse—attrition that strains agency operations long after funding is restored.[3] The Congressional Budget Office estimated the 2025 shutdown would cost roughly $11 billion in lost economic growth.[4] Families, federal workers, small businesses, travelers, and the broader economy all bear the burden when Washington fails to keep the government open.

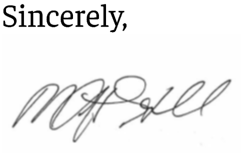
Critically, shutdowns do nothing to improve the appropriations process itself. The underlying problem is Congress's chronic difficulty completing its funding work on time. Over the past four decades, lawmakers have enacted all 12 annual appropriations bills before the start of the fiscal year just four times, and they have relied on more than 200 continuing resolutions since 1977 to keep the lights on.[5] Shutdowns add chaos and cost without resolving the disagreements that cause them, and they do not bring Congress any closer to fulfilling its obligations.
That is why our overriding priority—and, we believe, the goal shared across this committee—is a stronger annual appropriations process that is genuinely bipartisan, deliberative, and completed on time, and through which Congress fully exercises its constitutional power of the purse. The Bipartisan Policy Center and BPC Action strongly support preserving and

strengthening the role and influence of the budget process. Congress's intent is carried out most faithfully when lawmakers work through regular order and set the government's priorities in clear legislative text, rather than defaulting to short-term stopgaps or ceding ground to the executive branch amid a funding crisis.

The *Prevent Government Shutdowns Act* offers a practical, bipartisan path forward. By providing for an automatic continuing resolution when appropriations lapse, the bill would keep agencies open and operating at existing funding levels. Its procedural incentives would also keep members in Washington and focused on appropriations until their work is done. After the damaging shutdowns of the past year, Washington needs a better way to manage funding deadlines—one that keeps the government open without inflicting harm on our nation. BPC Action applauds House Budget Committee Chairman Jodey Arrington (R-TX) and Rep. Jimmy Panetta (D-CA), along with Sens. James Lankford (R-OK), Maggie Hassan (D-NH), and their bipartisan cosponsors, for advancing this commonsense reform.

BPC and BPC Action have long worked with lawmakers and experts in both parties to build a budget process that is more efficient, timely, and effective. Ending the threat of government shutdowns is essential to that effort, and the *Prevent Government Shutdowns Act* would help get the appropriations process back on track. We appreciate the committee's attention to this issue and welcome the opportunity to serve as a resource as your work continues.

Sincerely,



Michele Stockwell
President
Bipartisan Policy Center Action

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[1] Sanya Bahal, Upamanyu Lahiri, Andrew Lautz, Caleb Quakenbush, and Rachel Snyderman, "What Happens if the Government Shuts Down?," Bipartisan Policy Center, last updated May 5, 2026. Available at: https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/what-happens-if-the-government-shuts-down/.

[2] Bahal et al., "What Happens if the Government Shuts Down?"

[3] Bahal et al., "What Happens if the Government Shuts Down?" (For the furlough figures specifically, you may instead cite the underlying BPC piece: Aaron Till and Fredrick Hernandez, "Who Is Missing Paychecks in the 2025 Shutdown—When and Where?," Bipartisan Policy Center, November 21, 2025. Available at: https://bipartisanpolicy.org/explainer/who-is-missing-paychecks-in-the-2025-shutdown-when-and-where/.)

[4] Congressional Budget Office, A Quantitative Analysis of the Effects of the Government Shutdown on the Economy Under Three Scenarios, as of October 29, 2025, October 29, 2025. Available at: https://www.cbo.gov/publication/61823. (Or, to keep the citation with BPC: Bahal et al., "What Happens if the Government Shuts Down?")

[5] Bahal et al., "What Happens if the Government Shuts Down?"