



January 11, 2019

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

President Trump, Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader McCarthy, and Leader Schumer:

The National Council of Nonprofits stands with the National Governors Association, the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, and the majority of the American people in urging you to immediately reopen the federal government. The government shutdown is no mere negotiating tactic; it is a tragic failure of leadership dating back to before the new Fiscal Year began on October 1 that now has very real and lasting consequences for our fellow Americans, our communities, and our organizations.

Charitable nonprofits are on the front lines of our nation's most pressing problems, whether caring for returning soldiers, educating children, rebuilding cities, training the workforce, nursing the sick, supporting our elders, elevating the arts, housing the homeless, mentoring our youth, protecting natural resources, nurturing our faith and spirituality, promoting diversity, inclusion, and equity, and many more ways of touching the lives of Americans in every community, every day. These organizations are all committed to their missions of improving lives and do not care about who wins or loses political points in this senseless confrontation. The federal government shutdown is imposing growing burdens for which there is no reasonable justification. In addition to costing the economy billions of dollars already, the shutdown is imposing unfunded costs on nonprofits, resulting in direct harm and significant collateral damage to the work of charitable nonprofits across the country.

Direct Harm to Nonprofits: Charitable nonprofits – and therefore the people and communities they serve – have been suffering direct harm from the shutdown. For instance, furloughed federal employees, kept from their jobs, cannot issue grants or contracts to nonprofits and cannot make payments to reimburse nonprofits for work they already have performed for the government. People in need still turn to nonprofits seeking assistance because they can't wait for policymakers to agree. As this shutdown drags on, these and other organizations are forced to take out lines of credit or lay-off staff and reduce or eliminate certain services, costs in economic and human terms that will never be recovered even when government operations return to normal.

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Nonprofits as Collateral Damage: Equally harmful are the indirect, yet still significant financial and human costs of the shutdown that charitable organizations are experiencing with increasing frequency. Furloughed federal employees who previously were regular contributors to the Combined Federal Campaign are now showing up at local food banks seeking boxes of food to tide them over until reason prevails in Washington. They are joining the already long lines of individuals seeking assistance. Nonprofits providing various forms of human services are being called upon to provide support for new populations of persons in need – federal employees and contractors out of work through no fault of their own. And most tragically, we are learning of the toll your failure to reach agreement is playing out in terms of stressing worried couples and parents to the point of forcing some family members to seek protection at domestic violence shelters – many of which will not be receiving their funding due to the shutdown. The dollars and hours of service diverted from nonprofit missions to address this politician-inflicted crisis will never be recouped and the unnecessary human toll will not be erased in too many instances.

Charitable nonprofit organizations are integrally involved in the economies of their communities, their states, and the country. Nonprofits employ more than 12 million individuals nationally, which is more employees than the construction, finance, and insurance industries combined. In many states, nonprofit employment exceeds 10 percent of the workforce. The Government Accountability Office has documented that governments hire and “rely on nonprofit organizations as key partners in implementing programs and providing services to the public, such as health care, human services and housing-related services.” Yet there are tangible limits. The federal government cannot shirk its responsibilities and offload unfunded unanticipated services for which nonprofits simply do not have existing capacity to handle.

To be clear, it is not the business of the charitable sector of the economy to overload their vital missions by filling the gaps and protecting Americans from their own government. When governments deny spending, they don't cut human need by an equal amount – and indeed, as this shutdown is showing in dramatic fashion, they compound the human need and pain. Charitable nonprofits cannot reasonably be expected to serve as the shutdown shock absorbers; the stress of this breakdown in federal leadership is too great to absorb.

It is our honor and duty on behalf of the nonprofit sector to join with leaders of the public sector and the for-profit business sector in calling on you to immediately reopen the federal government and then negotiate on the issues that divide you.

Sincerely,



Tim Delaney
President & CEO

Copies to all Representatives and Senators