

RESPONDING TO THE PARTIAL FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Snapshots of the services and resources provided by local governments in metropolitan Washington to help meet residents' needs

February 2019



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February 13, 2019

ABOUT COG

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) is an independent, nonprofit association that brings area leaders together to address major regional issues in the District of Columbia, suburban Maryland, and Northern Virginia. COG's membership is comprised of 300 elected officials from 24 local governments, the Maryland and Virginia state legislatures, and U.S. Congress.

CREDITS

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OVERVIEW

The partial shutdown of the federal government lasted for 35 days from December 22, 2018 until January 25, 2019. It was the longest shutdown in U.S. history and caused considerable and unnecessary harm to residents and businesses in the metropolitan Washington region. Although the region's economy continues to diversify, the federal government remains a significant presence with 361,000 federal employees and more than 400,000 contracted employees in a region of 3.1 million workers.

Dr. Stephen Fuller of George Mason University estimated that about 145,000 employees, 40 percent of the region's federal workforce, were affected by the shutdown, as well as more than 100,000 contracted employees. In addition, numerous small businesses and service economy workers who support federal workers and contractors felt the impact.

During the shutdown, local governments stepped up and offered a wide range of support to area residents. They did so in coordination with a strong network of partners, including nonprofits, charities, faith-based organizations, utilities, and businesses, providing food, financial assistance, and employment services. Some jurisdictions offered free public transit to affected workers as well as reduced fees for city and county recreational opportunities. Many also shared information for people to cope with stress.

This brief report highlights how local governments in the region responded to the shutdown. The information presented has been gleaned from city and county websites and input provided to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) by its members. It is not inclusive of all services provided.

COG's Role: Analyzing the Potential Impact, Convening Leaders

At the January 2019 meeting of the COG Board of Directors, staff briefed officials on the potential widespread impact of the shutdown. An initial COG analysis of where federal workers live showed them evenly dispersed region-wide—about 42 percent each in Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland and more than 15 percent in the District of Columbia.

Following the presentation, the COG Board approved a letter to the president and congressional leaders urging an immediate end to the shutdown. Staff members said they would provide additional analyses and help convene leaders to support COG member governments and nonprofit partners serving residents who had been adversely affected.

An initial COG analysis of where federal workers live showed them evenly dispersed region-wide—about 42 percent each in Northern Virginia and suburban Maryland and more than 15 percent in the District of Columbia.

COG staff next analyzed data to identify the places where workers most vulnerable to the shutdown live and focused on census block groups in the region where half of full-time federal workers earn less than \$75,000. They found concentrations of lower-earning workers in Prince George's County inside the Beltway, in wards 7 and 8 in the District, as well as clusters in many other places like West Alexandria, Germantown, Northern Gaithersburg, Hybla Valley, Laurel, Waldorf, and Woodbridge.

COG staff shared this data with city and county managers, human services directors, and nonprofits and charities to help inform their work responding to residents' needs.

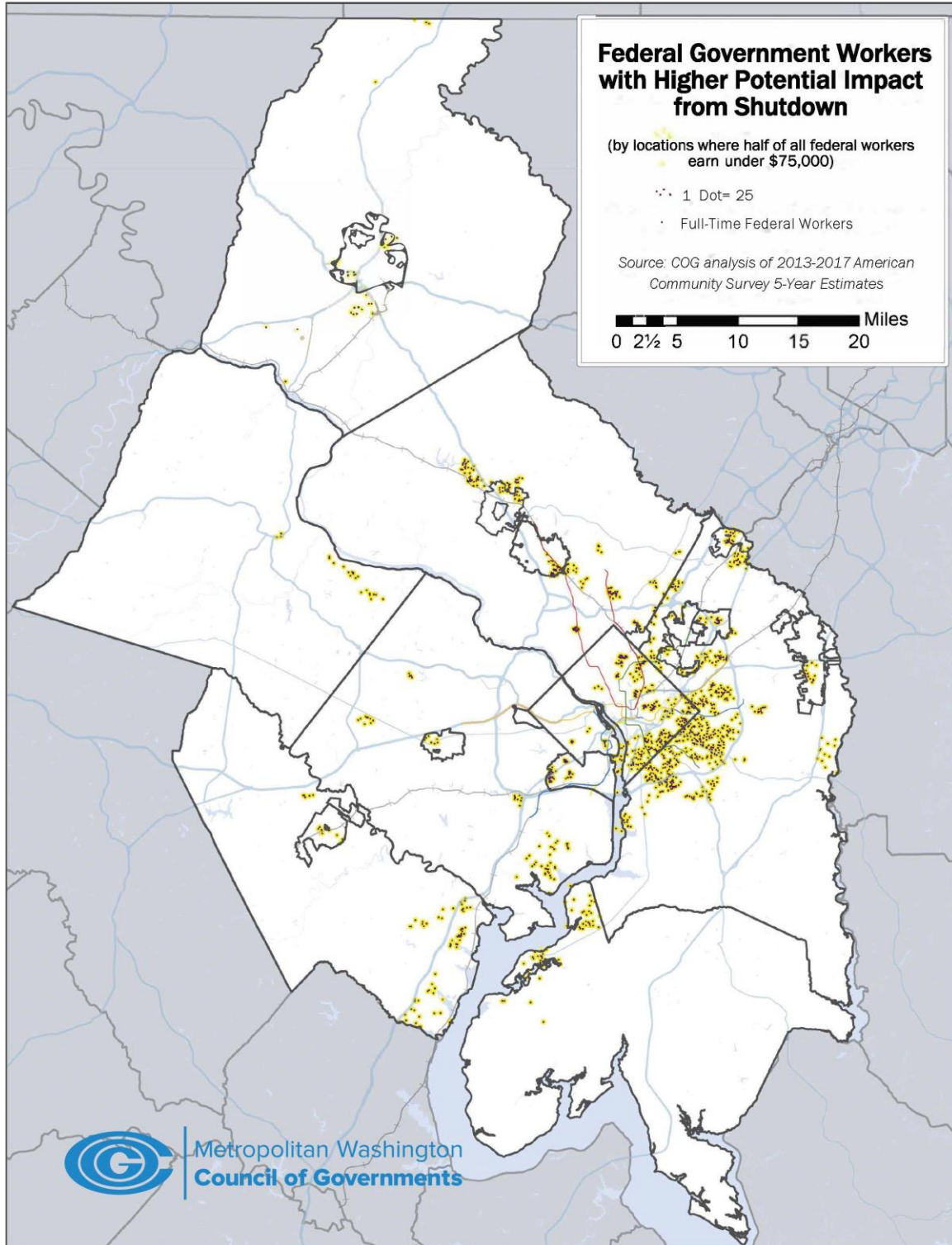
In partnership with the United Way of the National Capital Area, COG also convened human services directors and nonprofit partners to share updates on their activities and the demand for assistance in their communities. COG staff also participated on coordinating calls with area philanthropic organizations led by the Greater Washington Community Foundation. Both the United Way and the Community Foundation restarted their emergency funds for the shutdown—the Emergency Assistance Fund and the Resilience Fund, respectively.

Where Federal Workers Live in the Region

Jurisdiction	% of Regional Federal Workforce
District of Columbia	15.4%
Charles County	3.8%
Frederick County	2.8%
Montgomery County	18.2%
Prince George's County	17.1%
Suburban Maryland	41.9%
Alexandria	4.3%
Arlington County	6.4%
Fairfax	0.3%
Fairfax County	19.5%
Falls Church	0.4%
Loudoun County	4.1%
Manassas	0.3%
Manassas Park	0.2%
Prince William County	7.2%
Northern Virginia	42.7%
Region	100.0%

Source: COG analysis of 2013-2017 American Community Survey Data

Where Federal Workers Most Vulnerable to the Shutdown Live in the Region



Source: COG analysis of 2013-2017 American Community Survey Data

SNAPSHOTS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCES

Local governments and officials shared information on their services and resources through outreach to the media, as well as digital communications, like newsletters and social media. Many jurisdictions posted information on their websites, either through shutdown-specific pages or news releases, where they promoted new and existing services and resources being offered to furloughed federal workers. For example, **Fairfax County** promoted its Coordinated Services Planning, which connects residents to county and community-based services and resources.

These web pages gathered information in a central place and were updated throughout the shutdown with links to food pantries, emergency financial assistance, social services, employment counseling, and more. The following are some shutdown page screenshots and highlights of how the region's local governments responded to the shutdown. The content shared below is not an exhaustive list of all services provided.

A longer list of government and utility websites is provided in the Appendix. COG kept this information updated on its own shutdown page and shared it with partner nonprofits and charities.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
MURIEL BOWSER, MAYOR

Federal Government Shutdown Assistance

During a shutdown, there are no winners and our nation's federal workers, including the 170,000 federal employees who work in Washington, DC, pay the highest prices. We know that during a federal government shutdown, many employees and businesses in the District experience a sudden loss of income. We also know that the effects are not limited to federal employees and that there are trickle down impacts on our local economy.

Food Assistance
Several organizations and agencies are pitching in to offer food assistance, including groceries and meals, to affected workers.
[Find out more](#)

Mortgages, Loans and Credit
Many lenders will waive late fees and other penalties for affected federal employees. In addition, some banks and credit unions are offering low or no interest rate loans to help people who need immediate cash.
[Learn about how to get help](#)

Unemployment
As of 7 pm on January 23, 2019, 8,001 federal workers and an estimated 1,928 contractors, for a combined estimated total of **9,929** individuals, have filed for unemployment benefits in the District of Columbia during the partial federal government shutdown that is still underway. #EndTheShutdown
[Learn more about filing for unemployment benefits](#)

Shutdown Page, Partial Screenshot (District of Columbia)

Federal Government Shutdown Resources

During the ongoing partial shutdown of the federal government, Arlington County is taking actions to help ease the financial stress that County residents and businesses may be experiencing.

Read more about the County's response to the federal shutdown



County Resources

Public Benefits Programs

The Department of Human Services is monitoring the status of federal assistance programs administered by the County, including Housing Choice Voucher, SNAP, WIC and others. These programs are not currently affected by the shutdown, but DHS will update their status page should any changes occur.

Employment Services

The Arlington Employment Center is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for any impacted federal employees who wish to receive job search and employment case management services or to receive assistance in applying for Unemployment Insurance (UI) through the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC).

Emergency Assistance

For any Arlington residents affected by the federal government shutdown and in need of emergency financial, housing, or transportation assistance, Arlington County is committed to helping its residents to the extent possible. Please call 703-228-1300 or visit Arlington County's Department of Human Services (2100 Washington Blvd), Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., or Tuesday evenings until 8 p.m.

Utility Bills

The Department of Environmental Services will be waiving late fees on the County utility bill for furloughed federal employees impacted by the government shutdown. Affected customers should call the County's Customer Contact Center at 703-228-6570 to see if we may be able to assist in a payment arrangement to avoid any late fees. This will be on a case-by-case basis.

Tax Deadlines

If you are having trouble meeting a tax deadline due to the furlough, call the Treasurer's Office at 703-228-4000 for information about the Taxpayer Assistance Program.

Park and Recreation Fees

The Department of Parks and Recreation maintains a Fee Reduction Policy for individuals or families who might have difficulty paying park and recreation fees.

Arlington Public Schools

APS has provided reminders to parents about its meal services and Extended Day program policies, which may provide some relief to affected families.

Overdue Library Book Fines

Arlington Public Library may waive outstanding overdue fines for furloughed federal employees. Affected patrons should visit any location or contact the Library (703-228-5940) and provide a valid federal employee ID. Arlington Public Library locations offer free meeting room, public computers, comfortable seating and study space for those unable to access their regular office space.

Meet other job seekers at Job Club on Mondays at Central Library.

Small Business Assistance

Small businesses needing assistance can contact Arlington BizLaunch, the County's small business and entrepreneurial assistance network. Please contact the office if you are

Shutdown Page, Partial Screenshot (Arlington County)

Federal Government Shutdown 2019



5061 SHARES

Share on Facebook

Share on Twitter

Updated Jan. 18, 2019

Thousands of federal workers, contractors, vendors and service providers in our county are being impacted by the partial federal shutdown. It can be frightening and stressful to be without a paycheck and unsure of when you will go back to work. Whether it is food, financial assistance or other needs, we can provide you with the resources to get you and your family through this difficult time.

Want to help your neighbors in need? We also have information on providing cash and other donations to our local nonprofits.



How To Get Help

Coordinated Services Planning (CSP) connects Fairfax County residents to county and community-based services and resources. Just one phone call will get you connected to the information and assistance you need. Call 703-222-0880, TTY 711. In addition, our multilingual staff can assist callers in Amharic, Arabic, Dari, Farsi, French, Hindi, Italian, Korean, Pashto, Punjabi, Somali, Spanish, Swedish, Tigrinya and Urdu. CSP services are also available in other languages through the use of an interpreter.



Shutdown Page, Partial Screenshot (Fairfax County)


Federal Shutdown Assistance Portal


It is unconscionable that the federal government has shut down over the border wall. Montgomery County is home to thousands of federal employees and contractors. The loss of income not only impacts these workers and their families but our local economy. It's imperative that the government reopen so these residents can get back to work. I want these workers to know they have my full support during this trying time. To that end, I implore landlords and business-owners, who may also be feeling the effects, to develop compassionate workarounds to help the federal employees and contractors affected by this unacceptable situation.




Marc Elrich
County Executive

 Department of Health & Human Services


 Education

 Food services

 Nonprofit Partners

 Parks & Recreation

 Public Library

 Unemployment insurance

 Utility Partners

Shutdown Page, Partial Screenshot (Montgomery County)

Federal Government Shutdown Assistance

Many Prince Georgians are living in uncertain times as the partial federal government shutdown continues. While our friends and neighbors are faced with making tough financial decisions, your government and its partners have worked collaboratively to provide relief. We hope these resources will offer some level of security and stability for your families during this difficult time. Please know that while things may have grinded to a halt in Washington, we are continuing to fight and serve on your behalf.

Angela D. Alsobrooks
County Executive
Prince George's County

[Bank Assistance](#)

[Childcare Resources](#)

[Disability Assistance](#)

[Food Assistance](#)

[Health Care Assistance](#)

[Higher Education Assistance](#)

[Housing Assistance](#)

[Special Deals](#)

[Unemployment](#)

[Utilities Assistance](#)

[Additional Resources](#)

[How Can I Help My Neighbor](#)

Shutdown Page, Partial Screenshot (Prince George's County)

Food Assistance

Food banks around the area reported an increase in demand for their services during the shutdown. Several jurisdictions included links and information to guide residents in need of food assistance. For example, **Prince George's County** was one of the jurisdictions that highlighted the Capital Area Food Bank's search tool, allowing users to find their local food banks and access food resources after entering their zip codes. The **District of Columbia's** website promoted free pop-up markets for government employees organized by Capital Area Food Bank as well as free groceries provided by Bread for the City's centers.

Montgomery County's website noted that many providers, such as the Capital Area Food Bank, Manna Food Center, and Healing and Deliverance Ministry, were introducing temporary measures to help those impacted by the shutdown, such as removing income eligibility requirements to receive food, organizing food donation drives, or working to get more food to more providers.

The **Loudoun County Board of Supervisors** approved up to \$25,000 in financial aid to two local food pantries, and the **Prince William Board of County Supervisors** allocated \$30,000 from the county's contingency fund for emergencies to support three area food banks which had reported a significant increase in demand for food.



Prince George's County Executive Angela Alsobrooks and Prince George's County Council Chair Todd Turner join other county leaders and the United Way to discuss county services and resources available to affected residents, such as food assistance, utilities assistance, and childcare resources. (Angela Alsobrooks/Twitter)

SNAP/FOOD STAMPS

Jurisdictions were monitoring the status of federal assistance programs, like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) program, also known as the food stamp program. Many said they would notify recipients of impacts from the shutdown as well as any changes to income verification requirements to make these benefits available to some furloughed workers.

SERVICES FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN

School districts throughout the region reassured parents that their children could be eligible for programs providing free or reduced-priced lunches during the shutdown. For example, **Charles County Public Schools** provided a temporary \$30 credit for students to use when their balances reach \$0. The policy will remain in place for 30 days following the federal government reopening.

Financial Assistance

Jurisdictions promoted several existing temporary financial assistance services—and created some new ones—to help affected residents meet their needs and pay their bills during times of hardship. For example, many jurisdictions advised all residents impacted by the shutdown to immediately contact their mortgage lender, credit card company, student loan servicer, or insurance company to explain their situation.



At the US Conference of Mayors meeting, District of Columbia Mayor Muriel Bowser announces a new Mortgage Assistance Program to help District residents, including furloughed full-time federal government employees, avoid mortgage delinquency. (Mayor Muriel Bowser/Twitter)

RENTAL AND MORTGAGE ASSISTANCE

Montgomery and Prince George's Counties

promoted programs to help residents avoid eviction and foreclosure, through counseling and emergency financial assistance.

Through the Mortgage Assistance Program, the **District of Columbia** created a \$9 million program to help District residents, including furloughed full-time federal government employees, avoid mortgage delinquency through zero-interest, recourse loans to qualified homeowners.

Unemployment Benefits, Workforce Training

Jurisdictions promoted their programs assisting individuals applying for unemployment benefits as well as existing workforce training services and job opportunities for furloughed workers.

WORKFORCE TRAINING

The **District of Columbia** highlighted its Workforce on Wheels (WOW) team mobile service operation developed by its Department of Employment Services (DOES) to address the needs of the District's youth and other residents in the communities where they live. Commissioned to serve constituents in underserved communities, the WOW team and mobile unit allows DOES to bring American Job Center (AJC) resources and services to neighborhoods where access is often limited. WOW operations were expanded and provided in wards 5, 7, and 8 throughout the shutdown.

In **Northern Virginia**, the Virginia Career Works Northern Region workforce centers reached furloughed federal employees through both direct walk-in services at the centers and through telephone inquiries. Many furloughed employees were seeking information on applying for unemployment insurance, which could be either completed at the workforce centers, or through the telephone or any computer with online access.

Financial counselors also provided workers with budgeting, financial management and related debt management at the United Way of the National Capital Area Financial Empowerment Center, located at the Virginia Career Works Prince William Center in Woodbridge, Virginia.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Arlington County offered resources for small businesses through BizLaunch, the county's small business and entrepreneurial assistance network.

Fairfax County Public Schools offered three hiring events for individuals affected by the shutdown that were interested in teaching positions. The school system employed some of these furloughed workers as substitute teachers.



Fairfax County Public Schools offered three hiring events for furloughed federal employees interested in substitute teaching positions. (FCPS/Twitter)

Childcare

Many jurisdictions offered fee relief or accepted temporary changes to their childcare programs. In **Fairfax County**, families impacted by the shutdown could continue to use services and apply for a reduced fee and/or develop a payment plan, as needed. The county's site also said families could request to be placed in a temporary inactive status, allowing them to discontinue services temporarily while maintaining their child's enrollment space in the School Age Child Care program.

Prince George's County announced that the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning childcare and preschool fees would be waived during the shutdown for furloughed residents currently registered with the program.

Healthcare

Frederick County promoted Mission of Mercy, which provides free healthcare, dental care, and medication to people who are unable to afford access to such care. It also noted that County residents are eligible to participate in a free discount prescription program and low-cost health and dental discount programs through the National Association of Counties' Live Healthy Initiative.

The City of Alexandria's page offered effective ways to cope with stress, including exercising, staying connected with others, and eating well, and where to access support when needed.

Mental Health

Several jurisdictions provided mental health treatment resources on their web pages and noted that the uncertainty of the government shutdown may cause increased stress and produce symptoms of anxiety and depression, even among those who are not federal workers. The **City of Alexandria's** page offered effective ways to cope with stress, including exercising, staying connected with others, and eating well, and where to access support when needed.

Transportation

The **Fairfax Connector** and **Loudoun County Transit** systems provided free rides for federal government employees affected by the shutdown who were still required to report for work. Users were required to show their federal photo ID to the bus operator when boarding in order to ride free.

In addition, the State of Maryland provided free rides for federal employees who were impacted by the shutdown on **Maryland Transit Administration** services like MARC and commuter bus.



Loudoun County Transit provided free rides for federal government employees affected by the shutdown who were still required to report for work. (Loudoun County/Twitter)

Utilities

Electric, natural gas, and water utilities throughout the region, such as **Pepco**, **Dominion Energy**, **Washington Gas**, **DC Water**, **WSSC**, **Fairfax Water**, and more, offered flexibility on bill payments to federal workers affected by the shutdown. COG staff compiled a list of the utilities and support they were offering and shared it with local governments and nonprofit partners. View the Appendix for the full list of Utility Support.

Higher Education

Charles County promoted a tuition payment plan established by the College of Southern Maryland with no money down or enrollment fee required. The plan did not collect tuition payments until the federal government budget was reinstated and workers had returned to their jobs. The college also issued one-time grants for students permanently affected by layoffs or not anticipating reimbursement of back pay.

Charles County promoted a tuition payment plan established by the College of Southern Maryland with no money down or enrollment fee required.

Prince George's County noted that residents in good academic standing and facing financial hardship due to the shutdown may be eligible for financial assistance through the Special Scholarships Hotline. Prince George's Community College Cares provides clothing and a food pantry to students in need.

Recreation

Jurisdictions promoted their local libraries, parks, trails, and events as free and low-cost resources open to all. **Arlington County** provided a range of payment options, including fee reduction, so that those affected by the furlough could participate (or continue to participate) in parks and recreation programs and classes. The **City of Alexandria** noted that its museums and historic sites remained open during the shutdown.

In **Montgomery County**, furloughed employees and contractors could participate in its Department of Parks & Recreation Summer Camp Registration Payment Plan and were also permitted free access to self-directed open play facilities, including access to the gyms, weight rooms, and aquatic centers at all country recreation centers. **The City of Rockville** offered delayed payments for summer camps.

In the **Cities of Gaithersburg and Greenbelt**, furloughed government and contracted employees were also offered special access to aquatic, fitness, and other recreational centers.

Assistance to All Affected by Shutdown

While much of the attention during the shutdown focused on the impact on federal employees, several governments stressed that their services and resources were available to all affected residents from contracted employees to service economy workers. On its shutdown page, the **City of Alexandria** noted it was offering assistance “to taxpayers and other customers directly affected by the federal shutdown, including federal contractors doing business with a closed federal agency or a service provider to a closed federal agency; business owners or principals with family members who were furloughed federal employees; or individuals or businesses with another demonstrable financial impact resulting from the federal shutdown.”

Several governments stressed that their services and resources were available to all affected residents from contracted employees to service economy workers

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

In addition to providing resources for furloughed federal employees, local governments also directed people who wanted to help to local nonprofits for information on what was needed. These included a **Prince George's County's** web page titled, *How Can I Help My Neighbor*, featuring links to donate to the county's public school meals program, area nonprofits, and utilities' special emergency funds.

Services for Pets

Arlington and Fairfax Counties, through their animal shelters, offered pet food and some pet supplies to furloughed federal employees needing assistance in providing for their pets. Jurisdictions also shared links to some regional pet food chains providing food to individuals with federal government identification.

APPENDIX A: LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEB PAGES WITH SHUTDOWN-RELATED RESOURCES

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

<https://www.mwcog.org/shutdown>

District of Columbia

<https://dc.gov/shutdown>

Charles County

<http://www.charlescountymd.gov/alerts/help-available-furloughed-employees>

Frederick County

<https://www.frederickcountymd.gov/7815/Federal-Government-Shutdown-Assistance>

City of Gaithersburg

<https://www.gaithersburgmd.gov/Home/Components/News/News/456/16>

City of Greenbelt

<https://www.greenbeltmd.gov/community/furlough-information-and-help>

City of Laurel

<https://www.cityoflaurel.org/comm/press-releases/13266-help-furloughed-employees>

Montgomery County

https://montgomerycountymd.gov/mcg/fed_employee-furlough.html

Prince George's County

<https://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/3053/Federal-Government-Shutdown-Assistance>

City of Rockville

<https://rockvillereports.com/rockville-offers-assistance-to-workers-struggling-during-federal-shutdown%ef%bb%bf/>

City of Takoma Park

<https://takomaparkmd.gov/uncategorized/resources-for-furloughed-agencies-employees/>

City of Alexandria

<https://www.alexandriava.gov/dchs/economicsupport/default.aspx?id=107606>

Arlington County

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/shutdown/>

Fairfax County

<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/news2/resources-for-county-residents-impacted-by-federal-shutdown/>

Loudoun County

<https://www.loudoun.gov/5149/For-Residents-Impacted-by-the-Federal-Shutdown>

City of Manassas

(temporary page)

Prince William County

<http://www.pwcgov.org/news/pages/Helping-Those-in-Need.aspx>

APPENDIX B: ELECTRIC, NATURAL GAS, AND WATER UTILITY RESOURCES

ELECTRIC AND NATURAL GAS UTILITIES

[BGE](#)

Expanding awareness of programs that can help customers through temporary or extended financial hardship, including budget billing and flexible payment plans

[Columbia Gas of Maryland](#)

Call customer service line to find out eligibility for payment assistance, including payment arrangements and one-month credit delays

[Columbia Gas of Virginia](#)

Call customer service line to find out eligibility for payment assistance, including payment arrangements and one-month credit delays

[Dominion Energy](#)

Offering options for individuals in need of financial assistance, including extensions, payment assistance, and payment deferments

[Manassas Electric](#)

Offering arrangements based on individual circumstances

[NOVEC](#)

Late fees will not be imposed, and electric disconnections will be deferred for the duration of the shutdown for eligible federal employees who are directly affected

[Pepco](#)

Offering energy assistance to those impacted by the government shutdown through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, Utility Discount Program, Greater Washington Urban League, and Electric Universal Service Program

[Potomac Edison](#)

Arrangements based on individual circumstances and referring customers to other organizations that may be able to assist them

[Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative \(SMECO\)](#)

Discussing payment plans with individual customers based on their specific circumstances and referring customers to other organizations that may be able to assist them

[Washington Gas](#)

Offering flexible payment arrangements for government employees directly impacted through the Washington Gas Budget Plan, payment deferments, and Washington Area Fuel Fund

WATER UTILITIES

[Alex Renew](#)

Waiving late fees and can set a payment plan for those experiencing difficulty

[Arlington County Water & Utilities](#)

Offering the opportunity to set up payment arrangements without accrual of late fees

[Bowie Water and Sewer](#)

Waiving late fees

[Charles County](#)

Lowering first payment deposit from \$50 to \$25 and can push payment to next bill

[DC Water](#)

Offering extended payment plans via customer support number

[Fairfax Water](#)

Offering payment plan for those on furlough

[Frederick County](#)

Working on a case-by-case basis if customers call in needing assistance

[Leesburg](#)

One-time penalty waiver with 24-month on-time payment history and payment arrangements

[Loudoun Water](#)

Waiving late fees on a case-by-case basis upon financial hardship, offering promises to pay and flexible payment plans that meet the individual customer's financial needs

[Manassas](#)

Working on a case-by-case basis if customers call in needing assistance

[Prince William County Service Authority](#)

Working case-by-case, including the TAP program and Helping Hand Program

[Rockville](#)

Offering late bill payment without penalties, if customers call or email per link

[Virginia American Water](#)

Will work out payment plan with customers who call before their bills come due

[Vienna](#)

January 31 payment extended until after the federal government reopens, late fees waived

[WSSC](#)

Waiving late fees; suspending shutoffs; and will work one-on-one with impacted customers



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