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## **URGENT ACTION**

**DATE:** October 15, 2013  
**TO:** Concerned Parties  
**FROM:** Hilary O. Shelton, Director, NAACP Washington Bureau

### **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUT-DOWN HAS DISPARAT IMPACT ON AMERICAS' RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES**

***A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF THOSE FURLOUGHED ARE AFRICAN AMERICANS; PEOPLE OF COLOR AND AMERICAS POOR ALSO RELY DISPROPORTIONATELY ON BASIC HUMAN NEEDS SERVICES BEING CUT TO SURVIVE***

#### **THE ISSUE:**

Members of Congress and the President of the United States have two mandatory jobs they must do: pass a humane budget and pay our nation's debts. As of midnight on September 30, 2013, Congress failed to fulfill its responsibility to pass a budget representative of the needs of all Americans and send it to the President for his signature. At the heart of the matter is the fact that a faction of the House of Representatives wants to use a short term budget agreement (a.k.a. a "continuing resolution," or a "CR") to delay for at least a year, or fully repeal, the comprehensive health care reform act (a.k.a "The Affordable Care Act," a.k.a. "Obamacare"). The Senate, on the other hand, wants a "clean" short term budget, free of policy initiatives, as also supported by the NAACP. As a result, much of the Federal government has been shut down. There are also similar debates over priorities in a long-term budget, as well as whether or not to raise the debt ceiling (which is also an issue the NAACP has taken a strong stand in support of through the Resolutions process in 2010). Like almost every national crises, racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately bearing the brunt of this shut down. Although the shutdown of the federal government is affecting all Americans, a disproportionate portion of the 800,000 furloughed federal workers are African Americans. This is because until now federal employment has traditionally been viewed as a secure employment sector and a fairly reliable and sustainable road to the middle class. As a result, while African Americans comprise 13.6 percent of the U.S. population, we make up 17.7 percent of the federal workforce. Specifically, as many as 150,000 African American men and women are being laid-off and will not be collecting their paychecks. And although a disproportionate number of federal employees live in the Washington, D.C., Maryland and Virginia area, 78% of federal civilian employees reside outside of the National Capitol area. Nationwide, the economy stands to lose an estimated \$55 billion if the shut down last 3-4 weeks. Some areas that will be especially hard hit: the 5 states with the greatest number of African American federal employees outside of D.C, Maryland and Virginia are Texas, California, Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

Furthermore, many of the programs most deeply affected by the shutdown disproportionately serve African Americans. For example, Head Start pre-Kindergarten programs, which rely on federal funding, have begun shutting their doors. According to the program facts, approximately 29% of the children enrolled in Head Start in 2011-2012 were African American. Of the approximately 1,600 programs in the country that are dedicated to offering nutritional, health, social and other services to low-income families, about 20 programs were affected immediately because their federal grants were not renewed. Lastly, if the debt ceiling issue is not addressed in a timely and responsible fashion, tens of billions of dollars in social security checks, food stamps and unemployment benefits will be delayed or possibly denied.

At this point, no one knows how long the shutdown will last or how (or if) the issues which led to it will be resolved. In order to avoid another national economic crisis (many African Americans are still struggling through the repercussions caused by the last recession), the NAACP is strongly urging all sides to put aside petty partisan politics and come to the table to address the real federal governmental needs of all of the American people in good faith. They are our democratically elected leaders, and they should lead with addressing the real needs and concerns of all of the American people.

## **THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:**

Contact your Representative and both your Senators and **URGE THEM TO END THE GOVERNMENT SHUT DOWN AND PASS A RESPONSIBLE SHORT TERM BUDGET (CR), A RESPONSIBLE LONG TERM BUDGET, AND INCREASE THE DEBT CEILING TO MEET OUR NATION'S ECONOMIC COMMITMENTS.** To contact your Senators and Representative, you may:

✓ **Make a Phone Call:**

Call your Senators and your Representative in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators'/Congressman's offices. The switchboard phone number is **(202) 224-3121** (see message section, below).

✓ **Write a Letter**

To write letters to your Senators, send them to:  
The Honorable (name of Senator)  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

To write a letter to your Representative, send it to:  
The Honorable (name of Representative)  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

**A SAMPLE  
LETTER IS  
ATTACHED**

✓ **Send a Fax**

If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators' or Representative's offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ **Send an E-Mail**

To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov); click on "*Find Your Senators*". Look up your Senators by state; go to their web sites for e-mail addresses. To send an e-mail to your Representative, go to [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov), and click on "*Write Your Representative*" (on the left hand side, just under "find your Representative"). This will help you identify who your congressman is and how to contact him/her.

## **REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!**

### **THE MESSAGE**

- It is the duty and the responsibility of our federally elected Representatives and Senators to act quickly and responsibly to enact a humane and just federal budget each year and to deal responsibly with the necessary increase of the debt ceiling to meet our nation's financial responsibilities.
- The lingering shut down is threatening our national economic well-being, which is especially dangerous given the fact that a large percentage of African Americans and others are employed in the federal government sector and are disproportionately still suffering from the last recession.
- As Congress addresses the federal budget, they should keep in mind the great diversity of Americans needs and concerns, encourage economic growth, to help eradicate poverty and to ensure a viable safety net for the most vulnerable among us.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!**

If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

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**Sample**

(date)

The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_  
United States Senate / House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20510 / 20515

**RE: TIME TO PASS A RESPONSIBLE BUDGET AND STOP THE  
GOVERNMENT SHUT DOWN**

Dear Senator / Representative \_\_\_\_\_;

As your constituent, I am appalled by the actions of those in Congress who have shut down the federal government rather than come to the table to advance the real needs of the great diversity that is the American people. They are playing petty partisan politics with the economic welfare of the American people while recklessly dangling our nation's purse strings. It is bad legislating and not the way to govern in the best interest of the great diversity of the American people. I would encourage you to act swiftly and responsibly and do all you can to end the shut down and pass fair, clean, and just short term and long term budgets and to increase the debt ceiling with no strings attached. Our economy is in a precarious position, and too many people are still suffering unnecessarily from the economic devastation caused by the last recession.

Because a nation's budget reflects the true values and priorities of "we the people", I strongly support a federal government budget which encourages growth among all sectors and protects the civil rights, civil liberties, and human dignity of all citizens, and provides for those in need. I thus hope you will do all you can to urge every member of Congress, both the House and the Senate, to put petty partisan politics aside and to act responsibly, to be committed to developing a federal budget which puts people back to work; rebuilds the economy; invests in infrastructure, research and innovation, worker productivity, training and education; eliminates wasteful and unnecessary tax giveaways for the wealthiest Americans and multinational corporations while closing unfair tax loopholes; and does not undermine basic safety nets, including health care, for low-and-middle-income people, seniors, children, as well as the ill and disabled.

Please contact me in the very near future to let me know what you are doing to alleviate the suffering, both in the present and potential future pain, of too many Americans. I would also be interested in knowing what you think I can do to help advance this crucial agenda. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and  
remember to include your address)

***Remember to contact your  
Representative and BOTH  
your Senators.***