**No Pay for Failure**

When Congress fails to do its job of agreeing on a budget, the government goes into a shutdown. Most of the government employees are classified as “essential and necessary”, which means that they are required to still go to work during the shutdown. However, they do not receive their paychecks during the shutdown. Usually, they receive “back pay” once the shutdown ends, so it ends up working out in the end. However, those employees’ lives are in turmoil during the shutdown.

My husband used to work for the federal government and was considered “essential and necessary”, requiring him to work during a shutdown. One such shutdown occurred FOUR days after we closed on our home. Unpacking our home came to a screeching halt because we feared we could miss our first mortgage payment. After all, some were talking that it could last for months. Luckily, it ended rather quickly (3 weeks). But, we were terrified. Another situation occurred on a Friday night when I was making our grocery list to go shopping the next morning. A late night vote was taking place after 10pm to see if Congress would fund the government for 1 week or shut down. I sat on my couch, watching CSPAN, with 2 grocery lists in front of me. One was a regular list (in case the shutdown did NOT occur). The other list had only milk, bread, eggs, mac-n-cheese, and Roman noodles (in case the shutdown occurred). The decision taking place in Congress that night would determine which list I could take to the store and how I could feed my family.

This is real! Shutdowns do affect real people. Hundreds of thousands of federal employees are affected, along with their spouses and children. But while regular Americans are struggling through a shutdown, the members of Congress are still getting their paychecks.

Many people cite Article I, Section 6 of the United States Constitution to claim that Congressional paychecks cannot be suspended during a shutdown. That section, the modification by the 27th Amendment, and no other part of the United States Constitution specifically talks about government shutdowns, let alone the continuation of Congressional Pay during a shutdown. It can be argued that since the 27th Amendment requires changes in Congressional Pay to not take effect until the following term (after an election), Congressional pay cannot be withheld.

However, this is not about a change in pay. This is a suspension in pay. What incentive do Senators and Representatives have to work together to agree to a budget? If their pay is being suspended, they are much more likely to eat some crow and start working together to get their job done.