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## "Listen, I live check to check": What the government shutdown is like for workers

5-6 minutes

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Negotiations for ending the second government shut down under the current administration failed again as a disgruntled Trump stormed out of meeting Wednesday with Speaker Pelosi and Chuck Schumer.

This shutdown is getting sticky. We are now approaching day 22 without a clear end in sight and I can't help but to think about the 16-day shutdown back in 2013, when my friend Bone, who had a government job at the time, almost lost his mind. ("Don't use my government name," Bone told me with a laugh.)

I remember all of us guys having to walk, sit and stand on eggshells around Bone during that time as he paced Ashland Avenue, burning cigarette after cigarette, ready to tighten his knuckles and fight anyone for any reason, even for saying something as simple as, "Hello, how are you?"

"But I'll tell you this," Bone told me on a recent phone call.

"Imagine being newly clean, off the hard stuff, and your lady just let you move back in because you found steady work after being laid off for a year, only to tell her that you ain't getting paid because

the government shut down.”

“Bro, I was flat broke, flat out,” he continued. “Surviving for me was an extremely difficult equation that took an equal-ass, crazy-ass amount of dedication and focus, man. Losing one check destroyed that; losing two checks — man, listen, I live check to check. We check-to-checkers, so we couldn’t afford to miss anything.”

Bone switched jobs and cuts hair now, and he says the 2013 shutdown motivated him to change up jobs.

"I can't trust this damn government," he said. "Why do they close? My lady chewed me out everyday over not having money, and those fights led to her kicking me out again."

"I could only imagine telling her I ain't getting paid 'cause Trump don't like Mexicans and he need a wall," Bone continued. "Nobody care about a wall. Mexicans [are] my bros. They come to my shop and spend money. So to answer you correctly, I was edgy around that time and rightfully so 'cause I needed my money. I'll never work for or recommend anybody to work for the unstable-ass U.S. government. Especially when people like Trump get elected."

It seems like the current administration doesn't really understand that everyone doesn't have a nest egg put away, and most people don't have rich mogul parents. Living check-to-check is extremely American. To add insult to injury, hardworking people are missing pay because Congress doesn't want to flip the bill for a wall that Trump said Mexico will pay for. To get a better understanding of the current state we are in, I spoke with National Archives Manager Britney Crawford about the plight she and other government workers are facing now.

“Personally, I’ve been fine as I was prepared for something like this

to happen; however, after talking to my staff, I do worry about the people that are not in my position. I have coworkers that are frustrated and it's getting stressful for all of us." Crawford, who has worked for the federal government for 14 years, told me.

According to Crawford, a huge part of that stress came from her office having to prepare for shutdowns four times in the last year. The process is strenuous; it includes extra planning, saving, making sure their work doesn't get backed up in the event of an extended absence, and writing letters in an effort to prohibit the shutdown from happening on top of their daily responsibilities. The only peace that lies in the midst of this madness is a Facebook group Crawford created called [Surviving the Shutdown](#).

Described as "a group to share free deals, resources and information to federal government employees on furlough," Surviving the Shutdown is free and open to all, federal and non-federal employees navigating this tough time.

Like my friend Bone, many government employees live check to check and their world would crumble without information sources like Surviving the Shutdown. The page is full of deals, resources, testimonies and requests for suggestions, such as "I registered at a temp agency today and I got a free sandwich at Oyamel" and "my 13-year-old car has given up the ghost at the absolute worst time ever. Anyone have any recommendations for a place to look for a car loan? I'm a USAA member and can get 3.09% but that doesn't seem that great."

Every post is met with gratitude, and solutions offered to problems that people need solved to make it from day to day. They're giving each other the support that the government seems not to care

about. Crawford is planning on continuing to run the group after the government re-opens, because in these unstable times, they never know when it will shut down again.

“Initially I felt hopeless,” Crawford said. “But managing the [Facebook] group, creating resources and sharing information has brought back my sense of purpose.”