

TECHMUNC 2025

SPECIALIZED GA:
USGOV
BACKGROUND GUIDE



Letters from the Dais

Chair: Constance Tu

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to TechMUNC 2026! My name is Constance Tu, and I will be one of your co-chairs for this Specialized General Assembly committee. I'm a current junior in the Law and Society Major at Brooklyn Tech, and I joined Tech's Model UN team in my sophomore year. I've been able to meet so many amazing people and make so many great memories. I hope you will be able to say the same after your conference with us. We decided to model our committee off of current events, such as the United States government shutdown, but put our own twist onto it. Thus, this committee has become one like no other. You'll have to combine elements of debate, negotiation, diplomacy, and creativity to thrive in our unique conference! Please feel free to reach out to me at ctu7339@bths.edu. We hope you have fun, and we look forward to seeing you!

- Constance Tu

Email: ctu7339@bths.edu

Co-chair: Ava Todd

Welcome to TechMUNC 2026!

My name is Ava, and I am honored to serve as one of your co-chairs for this year's Specialized General Assembly committee. I'm currently a junior, and Model UN has been one of the most rewarding parts of my time at Brooklyn Tech since I joined my sophomore year. Through conferences, research, and many late-night position papers, I've met incredible people and made memories I'll never forget. I hope that your

experience at TechMUNC becomes just as meaningful for you. This year, our committee is inspired by the ongoing tensions and political uncertainty surrounding government shutdowns but transforms a familiar issue into an exciting, high-stakes simulation. This committee rewards diplomacy, but it also rewards imagination.

If you have any questions or just want to say hi before the conference, feel free to reach out to me at atodd1945@bths.edu. I truly can't wait to see the ideas, energy, and collaboration you all bring to this room.

- Ava Todd

Email: atodd1945@bths.edu

Rapporteur: Iffat Abidah

My name is Iffat Abidah, and I am so pleased to be a part of the government shutdown committee along with my amazing dias members! I am a junior at Brooklyn Technical Highschool, and have been a part of the school's Model UN since sophomore year. My time in MUN has been one of the most enlightening experiences, it taught me diplomacy, community and provided a look into the world's most pressing concerns. I'm extremely excited to present this specific committee, as it takes a more unique approach and reflects on current issues present in the U.S. I hope you guys feel that same excitement as you prepare, and I'm so intrigued to see how the committee proceeds. If you have any questions at all, please feel free to email me at iabidah5452@bths.edu, I can't wait to see all of you!

- Iffat Abidah

Email: iabidah5452@bths.edu

Introduction

It is an unfortunate reality that many modern governments, no matter how powerful or stable they may appear, remain vulnerable to internal paralysis. Among the most visible manifestations of this vulnerability is the phenomenon of a government shutdown: a moment when political disagreement grows so severe that essential institutions grind to a halt. A shutdown is not merely a bureaucratic inconvenience; it is a disruption that spreads through every layer of society. Workers are left without pay, essential services are delayed or suspended, and the everyday workings of a nation are placed in jeopardy. While shutdowns are often discussed in terms of political parties or legislative chambers, their real impact falls on the communities, industries, and advocacy groups that depend on steady government partnership.

Just as colonized regions once struggled under the weight of external control, modern sectors struggle under the consequences of political deadlock. Communities dependent on government services, industries reliant on federal support, and millions of citizens who rely on public institutions must adapt and persevere during these periods of dysfunction. Over time, shutdowns have sparked debates, protests, and national frustration, as affected groups fight to rise above the instability created by political conflict.

In this committee, delegates do not represent states on the world stage, but instead the departments of the United States government that bear the brunt of these crises. From agriculture and public health to justice and defense, each department has a distinct history with shutdowns, and each has fought to protect its interests when the government ceases to function. Understanding the origins, evolution, and impacts of

shutdowns is essential for crafting solutions that promote stability, protect vulnerable communities, and ensure that no department is left behind.

Topic History

The United States federal government cannot spend money without congressional authorization. When budget legislation fails to pass by the start of a fiscal year or the expiration of a temporary spending measure, large parts of the government are forced to shut down, halting “non-essential” services.

One of the first major changes was the Budget Act of 1974, which reorganized how Congress creates and approves the federal budget. It set deadlines, created the Congressional Budget Office, and limited some presidential powers. The goal was to make the process smoother and more predictable. Instead, it sometimes created more opportunities for conflict, because the strict timeline gave both parties more chances to block or delay spending bills. Later attempts like the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings Act and PAYGO rules tried to control federal spending, but they did not prevent shutdowns caused by political fights.

The roots of the modern shutdown system can be traced to the Antideficiency Act, a law originally intended to prevent reckless overspending. For decades, funding gaps occurred without major consequences, as agencies continued operating under the assumption that lawmakers would soon resolve disagreements. In 1980, Attorney General Benjamin Civiletti issued an interpretation of the Antideficiency Act to mean that agencies must stop activities that are not directly authorized by law if funding lapses, effectively making a funding gap trigger a shutdown of non-essential operations. A 1981 update narrowed which activities must continue. This legal re-interpretation created the structure for the shutdowns we now recognize. Once Civiletti’s opinions were spread, appropriations lapses increasingly led to formal shutdowns.

Just as colonization changed nations through force and control, shutdowns change societies through disruption. Their effects go across all sectors: agriculture loses access to essential safety inspections; public health agencies halt research and disease tracking; transportation networks face reduced oversight; education programs experience halted grants; and local economies reliant on federal support suffer significant losses. Over time, these consequences have sparked frustration, advocacy movements, and calls for reform.

The history of shutdowns is marked by major political standoffs that paralyzed governments for days or even weeks. The shutdowns of 1995–96, 2013, and 2018–19 stand as some of the most impactful, each revealing deep political divisions and exposing how fragile modern governance can be. During these periods, millions of workers went unpaid, federal contractors lost income, national parks closed, and essential research stalled. These shutdowns did not arise from a simple lack of resources, but from strategic political conflict, much like the geopolitical tensions that preceded global conflicts in earlier eras.

Through the 1980s, 1990s, and the 21st century, shutdowns changed from being short, administrative interruptions to high-stakes political tools used to score partisan points or gain policy concessions. Multiple political and institutional features make shutdowns likely in presidential systems like the U.S.:

- Electoral incentives: Parties sometimes prefer pursuing dangerous short-term policies if it can energize a political base or gain concessions.
- Annual appropriations calendar: The requirement to pass a dozen separate appropriations bills each fiscal year multiplies opportunities for conflict.

Historically, Congress has often failed to complete all appropriations on time.

- Separation of powers: Executive and legislative branches may be controlled by different parties, making leverage points around annual appropriations.
- Use of policy riders: Attaching controversial policy changes to must-pass funding bills gives minority actors leverage to threaten a lapse.

Each shutdown weakens public trust, strains institutions, and deepens vulnerabilities within essential sectors. Communities reliant on government stability; rural farmers, low-income families, public health systems, and small businesses, must continually adapt to the instability created by political ignorance.

When Congress can't agree on a full budget, the government often relies on continuing resolutions (CRs). These temporary bills keep agencies funded at the previous year's levels so the government doesn't immediately shut down. While CRs help avoid disaster, they also make it harder for agencies to plan ahead. They delay long-term projects, freeze hiring, and create uncertainty for schools, researchers, and local governments that depend on federal grants. As a result, CRs are more of a temporary band-aid than a real solution.

Throughout modern history, political gridlock has continuously tested the resilience of democratic governments, long before the term "shutdown" became well known to society. Legislative deadlock in systems has crippled governments, forced snap elections, and disrupted public services. Budget crises in nations like Belgium, Italy, and Greece have resulted in suspended programs, stopped public payments, or imposed emergency measures.

In the U.S., the shift toward polarized party politics in the 20th century increased the chances of budgetary standoffs, as parties increasingly used fiscal deadlines to advance ideological goals. The rise of divided government, when control of Congress and

the presidency is split, made compromise even more fragile, creating broader conflicts over taxation, healthcare, immigration, and national priorities. These developments created an environment in which shutdowns moved from rare constitutional curiosities to recurring national emergencies. The modern shutdown, therefore, is not just a procedural failure but part of a longer historical pattern in which political systems struggle to balance ideological conviction with the practical necessity of governance.

Although the specific causes of shutdowns vary, the underlying forces remain consistent: economic pressure, political rivalry, ideological conflict, and structural inefficiencies. As with independence movements during decolonization, sectors affected by shutdowns have begun to advocate for systemic change. Some call for automatic funding mechanisms, others push for multi-year budgets, and many argue for reforms that protect essential services from political conflict.

Current Situation

1) Understanding the Appropriations Process

Maintaining the federal government is a strenuous task which requires cooperation between the legislative and executive branches of the United States government to complete the annual appropriations process. The legislative branch, comprising the two houses of Congress—the United States Senate and the House of Representatives—holds the constitutional “power of the purse,” which refers to their control of government funding. As the head of the executive branch, the President proposes a budget that reflects the Oval Office’s focal points for the year and further reserves the right to veto the final bill. During the initial drafting period, Congress deliberates and adopts a budget resolution that establishes an aggregate limit on discretionary spending the appropriations committees must follow; they may choose to adhere to or defer from the President’s proposal.

Both legislative bodies are divided into 12 subcommittees, each representing specific services and programs which they must represent and advocate for. These 12 subcommittees are to create appropriation bills outlining budget needs while considering bipartisan concerns, the president's budget proposals, and the final budget resolution. Before the start of a new fiscal year on October first, Congress must agree upon and pass 12 annual appropriation bills for the upcoming financial year that allocates federal funding to three main areas: mandatory spending, discretionary spending, and interest on the public debt. Mandatory spending refers to essential services already outlined in a pre-existing law which are not up for congressional

interpretation; the majority of funds are allocated to these services. Similarly, payments towards interest on the public debt are processed by the Treasury with no intervention from Congress. However, little of the federal fund is allocated to this area. Debates on discretionary funding remain the main purpose of the appropriations process, as the committees hold power in determining approval for funding these agencies. Half of the discretionary funds go towards national defense while the other half is distributed to non-defensive discretionary programs (NDD). An additional comprehensive list shows that federal funding falls under:

- Mandatory (~ 65%)
 - Social Security
 - Medicare/Medicaid
 - Military/retirement pensions
 - Cannot be altered through normal appropriation processes
- Discretionary (~ 27%)
 - Defense budget
 - Education, NASA, transport, foreign aid
 - Shutdowns occur when discretionary appropriations fail
- Net Interest (~ 8%)
 - Growing rapidly, more than \$1 trillion soon

Bills approved by both houses of Congress—commonly packed into an omnibus appropriations bill or minibus bill packages—then must be sent to and signed into law by the President. The passing and implementation of these bills uphold necessary and defensive federal agencies, in principle “keeping the government open.” When Congress fails to reach an agreement on these bills, or, more commonly, when the President

utilizes the power to veto, and Congress refuses to waiver on certain budget allocations and partisan policies, federal funding is not determined and the government is considered shutdown. In cases of a government shutdown, non-essential workers are furloughed and non-essential federal services cease operations indefinitely. Services deemed essential continue to operate with possible disruptions and imminent strain of resources and personnel. This includes mandatory programs which are funded through long term authorizations and established law, and advanced appropriations preliminarily funded to avoid the risk of funding lapses. Essential workers are required to keep working to uphold these services without pay during the shutdown. Both essential and furloughed workers are entitled to retroactive pay after the shutdown lapses. However, the payroll is determined by the internal leadership of individual agencies. While the government is shut down, Congress must enter into negotiations to either pass the necessary appropriation bills to fund the fiscal year or pass a continuing resolution. This would serve as a temporary solution to provide short term funding for important services while discussions continue, prompting Congress to set a new deadline by which they must pass a full appropriations bill. The government is considered reopened when a continuing resolution or the appropriation bill is signed by the President.

2) Current Situation

Nearing the beginning of a new fiscal year, Congress has agreed upon a budget resolution limiting discretionary funding to \$1.6 trillion. The departments of commerce, energy, the interior, labor, transportation, treasury, and veteran affairs have succeeded in coordinating funding for their respective agencies with the president; their minibus bill packages are encouraged to remain unedited. The President is insisting on

renegotiations pertaining to the 8 departments of agriculture, defense, education, health and human services, homeland security, housing and urban development, justice, and state. The remaining budget is \$1.2 trillion. Historically, half of the discretionary budget has gone towards defensive funding. While the President's office seems insistent on persevering that practice by maintaining focus on justice and law enforcement, the question of funding remains up to debate on the floor. It is now up to the remaining delegations to compromise with the President's office but remain grounded on their principles while aiming to pass the proper bills necessary to keep the government from shutting down.

Disclaimer: While the idea and process of a government shutdown is taken directly from the current system utilized by the United States federal government, the current situation of the committee and how it will progress is not in reference to current events nor the real individuals that hold these roles.

Bloc Positions

Department of Agriculture

- Administrator of Farm Service Agency (FSA): The Administrator of FSA oversees programs that provide financial, emergency, and technical assistance to farmers. They ensure that the farm bill—which funds essential programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)—is upheld.
- Administrator of Risk Management Agency (RMA): The Administrator of RMA is responsible for managing the federal crop insurance program, which protects farmers against crop losses and is vital in safeguarding their livelihood. This role requires continuous assessment of agricultural risks and guaranteeing that farmers have reliable risk-management tools.
- Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): The Chief of NRCS directs national conservation efforts aimed at protecting wildlife habitats and improving conditions of our soil and water resources. They oversee the delivery of conservation programs, technical assistance, and financial incentives aimed at sustainable land management.

Department of Defense

- Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security: The Under Secretary oversees intelligence and security operations across the entire Department of Defense. Additional responsibilities include advancing cybersecurity protections, safeguarding critical information, and providing strategy for military purposes.

- Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics: The role establishes policies and programs that improve weaponry, technology, and logistical maintenance across the Department of Defense.
- Under Secretary of Defense for Policy: The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy is the principal advisor to the Secretary of Defense for Policy regarding national security, international security, and defense initiatives.

Department of Education

- Assistant Secretary of the Office for Civil Rights (OCR): The Assistant Secretary of OCR enforces federal civil rights laws that prohibits discrimination within programs that receive federal funding from the Department of Education (DOE). The OCR protects students from discrimination in their educational journey and manages the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC).
- Assistant Secretary for the Office of Postsecondary Education: The Assistant Secretary of OPE handles the OPE's objective in expanding access to postsecondary education and increasing college completion among American students. They also manage an abundance of programs that relate to funding for postsecondary education and servicing students.
- Assistant Secretary of Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development (OPEPD): This role entails supervising and examining the development and implementation of policies that contribute to the objectives of the Department of Education. They gather evidence that is used to improve decision making within the office and the department.

Department of Health and Human Services

- Administrator of Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS): The Administrator of CMS leads implementation of Medicare, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). They also oversee the budget for CMS and what it is allocated for.
- Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA): The Commissioner of the FDA oversees the approval of drugs, biologics, medical instruments, and food provisions. They also advocate for medical innovations and regulate tobacco manufacturing, marketing, and distribution.
- Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH): The Director of NIH is responsible for setting policies, managing programs, and identifying needs and opportunities for research or collaboration. NIH is a United States federal agency that aims to conduct and fund medical research to promote advancements in science.

Department of Homeland Security

- Director of Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA): The Director of CISA contributes to defending national security against cyber attacks or threats and coordinating risk assessments to promote cyber resilience.
- Administrator of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): The Administrator of FEMA is responsible for managing and ensuring the nation is prepared and protected from natural disasters and man-made emergencies. FEMA assists communities before, during, and after these disasters, providing care to those in desperate need during a time of crisis.

- **Director of the United States Secret Service:** The Director of the Secret Service oversees the protection of high-profile individuals and investigations regarding national and global crimes committed against the United States financial system.

Department of Housing and Urban Development

- **Assistant Secretary of Community Planning and Development (CPD):** The Assistant Secretary of CPD develops strategic budgetary plans for its mission and supervises a multitude of programs including the Community Development Block Grant programs, loan guarantee programs, and the HOME investment partnerships program.
- **Assistant Secretary of Office of Public and Indian Housing (PIH):** The Assistant Secretary of PIH ensures that Native Americans and those who are economically disadvantaged have access to safe and affordable housing. They also oversee programs such as the Housing Choice Voucher program and initiatives for housing for Native Americans.
- **Assistant Secretary of Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHEO):** The Assistant Secretary of FHEO is responsible for combating housing discrimination, enforcing fair housing laws, and investigating complaints regarding these issues.

Department of Justice

- **Assistant Attorney General (AAG) of the Criminal Division:** The AAG of the Criminal Division supervises over 1,000 Prosecutors and staff members in the

Division that investigates and prosecutes a multitude of crimes such as sex and human trafficking, cybercrime, and money laundering.

- Assistant Attorney General (AAG) of the Civil Division: The AAG of the Civil Division is responsible for ensuring that Americans' civil and constitutional rights are upheld, and the AAG is responsible for overseeing 11 sections in the Division that maintains this objective. Additionally, the Division also defends and protects the United States government and Congress' interests.
- Assistant Attorney General (AAG) of the National Security Division: The AAG of the National Security Division oversees the defense and protection of the United States from national security threats such as terrorism. The AAG also leads the NSD's initiative to promote cooperation among law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Department of State

- Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor: The Assistant Secretary of this Bureau promotes democracy all over the world and assists foreign governments who wish to establish democracies. Furthermore, they oversee the Human Rights and Democracy Fund, publication of the annual Human Rights Report, and represent the United States on issues regarding democracy and human rights.
- Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security: This role requires oversight of the security of United States diplomats domestically and internationally. They are also responsible for international investigations, threat analysis, and technological security.

- Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs: The Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs is responsible for overseeing visa and passport programs and protecting American citizens abroad.

Guiding Questions

1. What purpose does your department serve to the United States government and its citizens?
2. What are the spending needs of your department?
3. Are these needs essential to the wellbeing of the nation? How so?
4. What are some critical programs that are part of your department?
5. What minimum level of funding stability should be guaranteed to those programs?
6. How will you demonstrate the necessity of those programs?
7. What will the United States government risk from compromising on your department's budget?
8. How can departments work together to present unified solutions that prevent future shutdowns?

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