

Some non-park things that are shut down

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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When I [posted on the government shutdown last week](#), I grabbed a photo from the closed-down Statue of Liberty. It was an enticing editorial choice: Give me your tired, your poor, your furloughed federal employees yearning to just do their damn jobs again. But it was also probably an unhelpful choice. [Mike Konzcal's post](#) includes a similar photo, but as an illustration of how *not* to understand the shutdown:

The stories dominating the headlines are about national park closings and zoo cameras going offline, giving the sense that the "non-essential" parts of government are simply about facilitating leisure and vacations. And, like looking into the wrong end of a telescope, the stories of individual people and programs put on furlough doesn't communicate to the public what kind of overall functions are being abandoned by the state during the shutdown.

In short: even though [the Pentagon employees are back at work](#), even though the Obamacare exchanges are [held back only by the weight of bad web development](#), this shutdown is causing problems much deeper than spoiled national-park trips. Via Konzcal and elsewhere, here are just some of the ways:

- [Mortgage loan approvals are being delayed](#), bottlenecked by a shuttered IRS.
- U.S. markets lack both [information](#) and [oversight](#). [Global trade](#) is suffering. (But hedge funds are [trading on the shutdown](#)!)
- The Center for Disease Control is [no longer monitoring infectious diseases](#), and its [food safety system is deeply compromised](#). Ditto the [FDA](#).
- The EPA has [suspended cleanup work at 505 Superfund sites](#).
- [Clinical trials for cancer patients](#) have made the news a lot, but medical research generally has ground to a halt—and [it can't just be picked up again like nothing happened](#).

- Auto safety defect complaints [aren't being investigated](#).
- Even [the lights](#) will eventually be at risk.

Most troubling of all, the poor are getting hit—and may soon get hit much harder:

- Food aid is crippled, [WIC](#) especially but also [local food banks](#) that rely on USDA surplus. If the shutdown continues, [school lunches could be affected](#) as well. ([Food stamps](#) are okay for now [pdf], though not so much [related job training programs](#).)
- [The welfare-to-work block grant is unfunded](#). Many states will borrow from other budget lines to pay benefits in the meantime, but it's not clear how many of them or for how long.
- Head Start programs are relying—unsustainably—on [private philanthropy to get them through the shutdown](#).

Add to this the fact that the pre-shutdown government was running at sequester levels, which already cut (just for instance) [57,000 kids from Head Start](#). Now House Republicans' big idea is to set up another [supercommittee on deficit reduction](#). You need a supercommittee to say “we won”? Spending was already down. Deficits were already going down. These things didn't cause this shutdown.

Nor was it the result of Both Sides® and their inability to get an agreement across the finish line. [Shutting down the government was the right wing's plan](#). Shutdown is not a failure for which the tea partiers share responsibility with others; it's their wholly owned and operated *success*. They hold government in too little regard to see this as the recklessness that it is.

Because “government” isn't just Obamacare and tyrannical taxes and job-killing regulation. It's mortgage loan approval, informed investors, flu monitoring, food inspection, pollution cleanup, cancer research, auto safety, healthy power grids, food bank inventory, welfare-to-work, and early education. You think the private sector should do all this? Fine, but this week it's just not getting done. Enough already.