

# Washington, DC workers speak out against government shutdown

Our reporters  
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On Tuesday, *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke to residents and workers in southeast Washington, DC about the furloughs of federal workers that have been in place since the beginning of October.

Due to the ongoing crisis being stoked by both congressional Republicans and the White House, thousands of federal workers have been temporarily laid off. In Washington, DC residents have been particularly hard hit, as funding from the city's budget is tied to congressional spending, which because of the shutdown has been cut off.

Many workers who spoke to the WSWs reporters expressed exasperation at the current state of affairs, inquiring whether it would be possible to impeach representatives of the federal government whom they hold responsible for the social crisis.

William, a social worker for the city government, stated that although he hadn't been furloughed yet, he was fearful of what might happen Thursday, when federal officials are due to vote on raising the debt ceiling.

William said of congressional Republicans, "What they are doing is criminal," adding, "why won't [President Barack] Obama just override them?" When a reporter explained that both the Democrats and Republicans were parties of big business and the debt ceiling crisis was being viewed as an opportunity to cut social spending, William agreed.

Another social worker, who wished not to be named, stated that both parties were "a part of the same system, even though they both have different names." The worker continued, "Since the furloughs began taking place, I've seen an increase of about 300 people per day" seeking assistance for basic care. Connecting the disparity of wealth to the attacks on basic social programs, he said, "You can't tell me there is no

money in society, when you've got guys who make \$5 billion a year. That's more money than anybody could ever spend in their lifetime going to waste, and I see people starving out here [in Washington, DC]"

Joe and Anna spoke to a WSWs reporter on their way to a hospital check-up. Joe called the government shutdown and the related furloughs "a bunch of B.S.," adding that his wife, Anna, who is disabled, had been cut off from her Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments due to the shutdown, forcing him to take on extra work in order to support them.

Julia Reyes, a local resident, told the WSWs that she knew many people who were suffering due to the temporary government layoffs. "The gap between the people out of work and the number of jobs available is widening."

"No one in government speaks for us today, they all are bought and paid for by Fortune 500 companies," she said, adding that "giant manufacturers, banks, wealthy conglomerates, that's what they speak for, and that's why we aren't able to have the basic things that we depend on. No one. Not you or me."

Darryl, a volunteer worker, spoke several times of the need to "march" on Congress, adding that he didn't think "the people in Congress understand the daily ins and outs of how people struggle and what they go through. It's like they're playing God when they don't even know how things are. I don't think they actually want to make decisions that will help the American people."

In relation to the social crisis plaguing those in the District, Darryl said, "On top of the shutdown, I've been hearing they're going to raise Metro prices. I catch the Metro every day. That's going to hurt. I pay about \$5 a day, and don't want to think about it going up to about \$6 or \$7."

Lanette, a young mother, was outraged by the stoppage of basic social assistance programs. “Let me tell you about the shutdown. It’s personal. I have two kids and am on food stamps. My boyfriend works for the fire department and isn’t getting his check right away. It’s hard, and I just worry about how my kids are going to eat. I know other people in the WIC program and they need this money for their babies. You can’t just stop. People are getting angry, and they’re going to fight. I think that’s part of why there’s a lot of crime and people shooting each other.”

Lanette was eager to learn more about the Socialist Equality Party’s political perspective, purchasing a copy of the party’s political program.

Tony, a lifelong resident of DC explained to reporters that after having “been in DC all [my] life, I’ve seen things change. Even though it’s growing and expanding, these changes haven’t been for the better. Rent is higher than it ever has been.”

Tony asked WSWS reporters if they knew of any means for removing Congress from political power, “so that things could run more smoothly.” When it was explained that the current shutdown was part of a political strategy adopted by both Democrats and Republicans to force spending cuts on the population, and that what was required to break it was a socialist movement of the working class to fight for a society that works in the interest of the working class, Tony exclaimed, “That’s what I’m talking about! A mass movement of people banding together.”



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