



## Lee County Feels the Pinch as GOP Shutdown Disrupts Services and Local Livelihoods

Lee County and Southwest Florida are feeling the effects of the Republican-led government shutdown. What began on October 1, after Republicans in Congress refused to pass necessary funding legislation, has now resulted in furloughs, service disruptions, and growing financial strain across our region. While essential operations continue, the GOP's political brinkmanship is inflicting real hardship on local families and communities. Read on for impacts on services and residents.

### Impact on services and residents:

#### Airport and travel

- **Essential staff working without pay:** Transportation Security Administration (TSA) agents and air traffic controllers at Southwest Florida International Airport (RSW) are considered essential and must work without receiving pay.
- **Potential delays:** If the shutdown continues, it could cause staffing shortages and lead to longer security wait times for travelers.
- **Limited airport impact:** For now, RSW is operating as usual, though the situation could change if the shutdown drags on.

#### Financial assistance and food security

- **Food banks feeling the strain:** Local organizations like the Harry Chapin Food Bank in Fort Myers are concerned about the impacts, as 15% of its budget comes from federal programs that are now on hold. Local food pantries are at risk of being overwhelmed as federal support is suspended.
- **Benefits distribution:** Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments are continuing uninterrupted, but recipients are worried about the future of benefits like SNAP (food stamps) if the shutdown persists.
- **Housing and grants:** Local governments in Lee County rely on federal grants for housing and infrastructure projects. The shutdown could cause delays in funding, straining city and county budgets.

#### Healthcare for veterans

- **VA hospitals remain open:** The Veterans Affairs (VA) hospital in nearby Cape Coral remains open, and veteran health services are considered critical and unaffected by the shutdown.

- **Possible benefit disruptions:** While core healthcare is continuing, some benefits offices and counseling services have closed.

#### Real estate and flood insurance

- **Home sales delayed:** Homebuyers in Southwest Florida who need federal flood insurance cannot secure new policies or renewals during the shutdown. This prevents them from closing on sales if they rely on the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP).
- **Concern for sellers:** Residents trying to sell their homes are facing delays and stress over transferring existing flood insurance policies, as insurance agents are experiencing slowdowns.

#### Other federal services

- **Local offices impacted:** Federal offices in the area are operating with limited services until funding is restored. This has frustrated residents who need to access government programs and have been told offices are closed or services are suspended.
- **Federal employee hardship:** Federal workers in the area, including those at the airport, face significant financial stress due to working without pay or being furloughed. Local food banks are preparing to assist these families if needed.