

# U.S. Government shutdown narrowly avoided with a continuing resolution

**ASHTON JEFFERS**  
NEWS EDITOR

The United States Congress narrowly avoided a government shutdown on Oct. 1, passing a stopgap spending bill, also known as a continuing resolution, that is meant to fund federal agencies through a 45-day length, ending on Nov. 17, 2023. When one hears of a government shutdown occurring, concern shines through due to the very nature of the words used to describe this type of event. Some think it indicates treating a certain amount of time like a federal holiday, where one takes a day off from work or school. That understanding is somewhat true, but the results are a lot less exciting compared to holidays.

At its core, a government shutdown happens when Congress fails to enact 12 appropriations bills annually, which determine the amount of funding different government agencies are allotted. These agencies include Defense, Homeland Security, Energy and Water Development,

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**Roy Estala**  
Information Technology Specialist

Labor, Health, Human Services, Education and other related agencies. When a government shutdown occurs, many federal employees are asked not to report to work, except in the case of government employees who are deemed essential service

employees, which include law enforcement and air traffic control. These workers who have essential service roles do not receive compensation until Congress takes action and ends the shutdown. Only agencies without appropriations enacted have to shut down, which is known as a partial shutdown.

Shutdowns disrupt daily life, work and other services given through federal agencies like obtaining a passport or visiting and upkeeping national parks across the United States. While a few days of the government shutdown is a hassle, it can turn into a major problem for the overall economy when it becomes weeks. It impacts resources and benefits provided to individuals through government agencies and services.

The effect of a shutdown and the anxieties it brings can be difficult for the average civilian to understand. Roy Estala, member of the Department of the Air Force civilian workforce, shared his thoughts on the government shutdown being avoided at the start of October. To note, Estala's statements as a government civilian employee are his own personal comments and are not on behalf of the Department of the Air Force civilian workforce.

"The potential government shutdown has not affected the IT field in any way, and will not," Estala stated when asked if this moment at the beginning of October influenced or changed operations for his department in any way. "Either the work is done by other employees in my section, who were not affected by the shutdown. What I mean by other employees is there are different pots of money being paid to government employees. There are contractor employees, who get paid through a government contract, Non-Appropriated Fund (NAF) employees, paid through a separate pot of money allocated by the government and are not affected

by a government shutdown and General Schedule (GS), like me, who depend on the annual funding of the government," Estala continued. Often government agencies are a complex mixture of contracted project employees and employees who work for the agency specifically." Challenges might



During a government shutdown, federal employees are asked not to report to work, including public spaces often used. | Photo by Ashton Jeffers

be larger for some, but Estala's perspective shows that many individuals are affected even in small ways that influence jobs.

Estala has been working for the federal government for 32 years now in San Antonio, Texas along with his family and two daughters: one is a sophomore at Young Women's Leadership Academy and the oldest is a freshman at St. Mary's University.

"Unfortunately, my family and I are not prepared to handle a long-term government shutdown this November," Estala shared when asked if he and his family would be prepared for a potential shutdown if Congress could not reach decisions on appropriations bills. "When I say long term, I mean 2-4 months. If I am furloughed for

that long of a time, I will have to apply for unemployment benefits, but that also means that I must pay back any money I am given during my furlough. I was employed with Via Transit several years ago and would rather

seek employment there again. I enjoyed working as a bus operator."

Estala stated that he was provided information on the ongoing situation of a potential shutdown in September, which he explained from his past experiences of living and working through government shutdowns. "There

have been government shutdowns in prior years, and have not affected the positions I have held," Estala stated. "Prior to any government shutdown, we receive notifications continuously before; months, weeks [and] days leading up to the last day of a government shutdown. We are provided with information about other resources and agencies that may help."

During this time, updates of Congress' decisions will continue to arise, especially regarding the removal of Rep. Kevin McCarthy and who plans to run for the position of House speaker.

## Dr. Nichole M. Flores delivers "Our Lady of Guadalupe" in Lin Speaker Series

**MARIANA MATA**  
WEB EDITOR

On Sept. 29, the St. Mary's University Center for Catholic Studies presented the lecture, "Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Art of Solidarity," in honor of Hispanic Heritage Month and as part of the Lin Great Speakers Series.

The lecture was given by Dr. Nichole M. Flores, Ph.D. Dr. Flores is the Associate Professor of Religious Studies and the Director of the Health, Ethics and Society program at the University of Virginia. Dr. Flores researches the contributions of Catholic and Latin theologies with the notions of justice and aesthetics in pluralistic and democratic political contexts. Her research in practical ethics addresses the issues of politics, migration, labor, family, gender, bioethics, race, ethnicity and ecology. She teaches several courses on Catholic theology and ethics, religion and democracy, bioethics, and Latin theology.

Individuals who entered the Sarita Kenedy East Law Library were greeted by the President's Ambassadors and led to a table filled with items of Our Lady of Guadalupe, gifted by the St. Mary's University Center of Catholic Studies. The items included study sheets, postcards

and various prayer cards. As After visitors collected their gifts, they were escorted to their seats. Kicking the event off after a prayer, Dr. Flores was introduced by Dr. Jason King, Ph.D., currently the Beirne Director for the St. Mary's University Center for Catholic Studies and the Theology Department.

Dr. Flores began her presentation with different images of Our Lady of Guadalupe, including the famous "Veladora" of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a ceramic mural including a 3D votive candle, or veladora, with an eternal flame facing Guadalupe Street in San Antonio. Its purpose was to show that "Guadalupe is everywhere," stated Flores, Ph.D. During the lecture, she spoke about the many roles of Guadalupe that represented her people. These roles include her as an icon for the farm worker movement that was used for marketing purposes like Banamex, a Mexican banking company, and even as a feminist and pro-life model. Many wonder how this is possible. Dr. Flores explains that Guadalupe brings comfort in recognizing our humanity and dignity.

The story of Guadalupe goes back to Dec. 9, 1531, when the Virgin Mary appeared to Juan Diego, an Aztec peasant, on the hill of Tepeyac. She asked him to build her a church on that exact spot to share

her love for fellow believers. Juan Diego made his way to visit Juan de Zumárraga,



Dr. Flores courtesy of St. Mary's University

the Archbishop, of modern-day Mexico City. Zumárraga denied his request but after constant pressure from Juan Diego, he finally asked for a sign to prove the Lady's identity. Juan Diego returned to the hill where Our Lady of Guadalupe waited for him. She told him to climb to the top of the hill and pick some flowers to present to the Archbishop. Juan Diego found beautiful roses on top of the hill, even though it was the middle of winter. Juan Diego placed the flowers on his tilma, a cloak, and returned to the Archbishop's headquarters. On Dec. 12, 1531, after

waiting for hours, he presented himself in front of the Archbishop and revealed the flowers to him. They discovered the rare flowers and noticed that the Virgin's image was imprinted on the tilma. The tilma is preserved to this day and showcased at the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It remains one of the most sacred images in all of Mexico.

Although Our Lady of Guadalupe plays a role in representation, Dr. Flores focused on the effect she has on the Latino community in the U.S. She highlights that the reason why Our Lady of Guadalupe is important to many people, especially to many Latinos because Juan Diego's story is relevant to their own. From Juan Diego's people being under Spanish rule, to the Chicano community taking action in the Farmers Movement, Our Lady of Guadalupe serves as a symbol of power and solidarity. Although Our Lady of Guadalupe is known under different names such as Tonantzín, "mother goddess," she is still venerated by many. Her image is a message to her people that they are never alone in their suffering, no matter how grave their situation.

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