

# Opinion

## The government shut down, now what?

By **JOANNA FARRELL**  
Contributing Writer

As of midnight on Oct. 1, our government has officially shut down. But what is a government shutdown and why does it happen?

Government shutdowns happen when a budget cannot be passed through Congress due to a lack of votes. Contrary to popular belief, government shutdowns are pretty normal and happen every handful of years, with our last one happening in 2018 and lasting for 35 days — the longest government shutdown in history.

But this doesn't mean that government shutdowns are a good thing, nor are they exactly an effective way to push a budget.

Government shutdowns are the result of an extremely partisan Congress, where those on either side of the aisle will not negotiate a deal that satisfies both parties and makes their constituents happy.

The government shutdown will impact millions of Americans. Workers deemed as essential will continue their jobs, but they will not get paid. This includes military members, those in manufacturing companies, federal law enforcement agencies and so many more. However, workers will receive back pay for the time worked.

In Connecticut, we will certainly be feeling the impact. The naval submarine base in New London, Connecticut, employs nearly 8,000 federal workers along with the Coast Guard academy that employs 1,000. This is just a fraction of the federal workers

in Connecticut and an even smaller fraction of people who will be impacted as a whole.

Nationwide, everyday citizens will feel the impacts of the shutdown. Necessities for many like Social Security, Medicaid, veterans' claims, housing assistance and more will be put on hold until the government can come to an agreement on the federal budget this year. This is on top of the nearly 750,000 federal employees whose jobs will be suspended for the entirety of the shutdown.

Speaker of the House Mike Johnson, a Republican serving Louisiana's fourth district, is putting the blame on Democrats, taking to the social platform X, saying, "Democrats have officially voted to CLOSE the government."

Former Vice President Kamala Harris has also been posting on X about the shutdown: "President Trump and Congressional Republicans just shut down the government because they refused to stop your health care costs from rising. Let me be clear: Republicans are in charge of the White House, House, and Senate. This is their shutdown."

With all the finger-pointing, it can be hard to break down where the blame lies, if there is blame at all. Throughout the whole process of passing this budget, Republicans have been hard pressed to budge on President Donald Trump's proposal.

It would be a misstep to say that Democrats are solely to blame for the shutdown. The night before the shutdown House Democrats tried passing a stopgap — a bill that would give the government a temporary spending plan until the

end of October to allow further deliberation on a new spending bill. The bill failed as republicans voted it down 57-47.

What's happening right now in our government feels a lot like a toddler holding their breath because their mom won't buy them the toy they wanted from the store. Republicans are holding their breath and threatening to run away because the Democrats won't vote on a bill that cuts VA-benefits, Medicaid, SNAP programs and housing assistance.

I can't even begin to imagine what families will be going through for the duration of the shutdown. Waking up in the morning to go to work and you won't even receive your check at the end of the week. Rent and mortgage payments don't stop just because the government does.

But what pains me more to imagine is the millions of Americans who will lose their healthcare, or someone's grandma losing her Medicaid benefits, or my friends losing their homes because housing assistance was reduced or cut altogether.

I don't think Democrats are sticking it to the man by not voting yes on the budget. I think they've been voting down this budget time after time because they've seen exactly what I've seen: How these programs impact real lives. It's how hardworking people are waiting for their SNAP benefits to hit each month so they can provide food to their family because the average rent in the state



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**This is the second time the government has shut down under the Trump administration.**

of Connecticut is nearly \$2,000.

This is not a matter of budgeting, this is a matter of human decency, and which party is willing to allow Americans like you and me to suffer for a little extra change in their pockets.

## The world of K-pop needs regulations

By **GABRIELLA COZZI**  
Contributing Writer

The K-pop industry has a problem. This should be obvious to anyone looking but it's been covered in glamour and production value. Smoke and mirrors, fan service and attractive idols shield the sinister nature of most K-pop companies.

As someone who has been following the world of K-pop for several years now, I can say personally that I have seen time and time again the abuse that is inflicted on members of

K-pop groups at the hands of their managers.

Recently, I had a sobering experience. Scrolling through social media, I came across a K-pop group that had a sound I particularly enjoyed: CORTIS. Imagine my surprise when I found out four out of the five of the members were younger than 18, my age.

K-pop idols who debut over the age of 18, in fact, are rare. Most K-pop companies like HYBE or SM Entertainment are looking for 10-17 year olds when auditioning potential trainees. Even if they debut at 18, they are completing years of training and intense dance rehearsals before, with school on top of that.

MADEIN's own Yeseo is one glaring example of idols debuting too young. Born in 2005, she debuted at just 5 years old with the group CutieL. Now 20, she has debuted in three, nearly four, separate K-pop groups since then.

BTS's Jungkook, who might be a more recognizable example, became a member of BTS when he was in just eighth grade, after comprehensive training and audition processes starting from even further back in seventh grade. He debuted just a couple years later.

You might be thinking, child stars exist. Yes they do, but there are laws preventing the exploitation of minor workers in America. Very intense laws, actually. South Korea has them, yes, but what can be considered work exactly? Dance practices? Performing a concert? Production companies have their own level of power, and are usually not

questioned by the government when they violate these laws.

Pertinently, idols don't immediately see the profits of their work due to taking out loans from companies to fund their training, which take years to pay off. On top of that, with the amount of people in their managing teams that need to be paid for their work, they receive a small fraction of the money they bring in for their respective companies.

You can see, then, why it is so sinister to target young children with these deals. The younger you are, the less reasoning you have to look into the future. Only a small number of idols debut, and what happens to them when their dreams fail and they're left in crippling debt to a company for training them?

Beyond the industry itself, Saesangs, otherwise known as stalkers, are extremely problematic. There are an abundance of cases where a fan will follow an idol around for days or weeks on end, sitting outside their dorms, going to every concert, taking pictures of their private life, and more. K-pop companies do try and stop this, yes, but at the same time they encourage it.

Extreme fanservice encourages parasocial relationships between fans and idols that blur the line between fan and friend. When a fan is made to feel like an idol really cares for them personally, even if they may not, it can quickly become obsessive.

In one case, there was a scandal involving the idol Woojin. Rumors were spread that another idol, Jungwoo, was involved as well. A saesang that was

following Jungwoo took to social media to assure people that no, Jungwoo didn't leave his house the night the scandal happened so he couldn't be involved.

More examples of abuse in K-pop are the mistreatment of members of Loona and New Jeans. One of the members of Loona, Chuu, filed a lawsuit against her management company for alleged mistreatment. This included withholding of earnings, and even not being allowed to go outside during the day.

The company was taking large chunks of the money she earned as a soloist from brand deals as well. She won her lawsuit and terminated her contract, along with four other members of the group who all cited mistreatment from the company. The remaining seven members are still under contract.

New Jeans, or NJZ, is a group under HYBE Entertainment. In April 2024, they attempted to break away from the company and rebrand as NJZ, alleging workplace harassment, manipulation and unfair treatment. This court case is still ongoing, with many K-pop fans divided over the issue. Some call them selfish, but many rally behind them.

These are just a few of the many examples of manipulation, mistreatment and abuse that K-pop idols go through on a daily basis. There needs to be reform in the industry and in K-pop spaces to further work towards treating idols as the human beings they are.

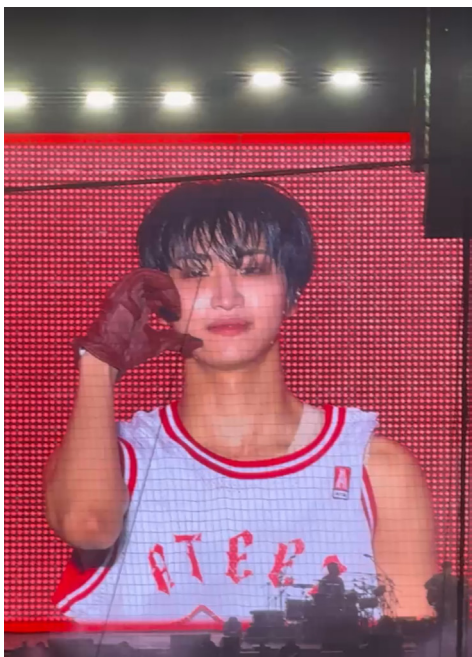


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**Park Seonghwa of K-pop band Ateez performing at Citifield in New York City on July 13.**