

# Why a Government Shutdown Has Me Thinking About Education More Than Ever

If I asked people to guess why the topic of education comes to mind in the face of the current government shutdown, many would venture to say that it's due to fears about keeping schools open, teachers getting paid, or school buses continuing to run.

Nope. It's none of that.

It's not even about whether school lunch programs will continue to be funded or whether tutoring will stop due to staff hours being cut. No, I'm thinking a lot more dynamically.

**I'm thinking about how education correlates to quality of life and what government has to do with either of those things.**

Many in the current administration would like us all to believe that a "government shutdown" will paralyze the entire country and cause desperate hardship and painful inconvenience to all of us. When I hear those messages, the first thing that comes to mind is, "Come on. Seriously?"

Why do I respond that way?

Ask yourself this: In what case would a government shutdown truly affect all, or even most, Americans in such harmful ways as we are being led to believe?

The answer ultimately lies in the question of how dependent any of us is upon the government. The more people who look to the GOVERNMENT to provide all their food, clothing, housing, medical care, free rides, free cell phones, free internet, and on and on... the more a government shutdown will affect America. On the other hand, the more INdependent any of us is – that is, the less dependent on government and the more able to do things for ourselves - the less a government shutdown will affect we, the people.

So where does education fit into all this?

Consider this: As the size of government has grown, the quality of education in America has decreased. In spite of the fact that America spends far more per student than those countries who far outrank us in student performance, our public school students come out with less and less of a solid educational foundation as each year passes. And the less educational foundation our students have to draw on overwhelmingly equates to students being less prepared, and with less options, for their futures. And this ultimately equates to dependence.

The classic fact still remains that knowledge is power. **There is no substitute for true knowledge and quality education**, no matter what the current social, economic, or political trends are. And that is truer now than ever before as more and more jobs worldwide are knowledge based.

As with most other functions in our society, our schools were intended to be run at a local level. The role of the federal government was always intended to be minimally supportive. In fact, government at the national level was intended, from America's very beginnings, to serve only the most basic functions – to maintain a military to keep us all safe, to maintain peaceful relationships with other countries, and to maintain the basic and peaceful unity among all the individual states.

**In other words, the federal government was intended to perform a maintenance function, while the real substance of keeping America running was intended to occur at the most local levels possible.**

As the fed has grown, it has increasingly meddled in matters that should be taken care of at a local level. This includes education. As the federal government has attempted to make all schools more equal, it seems that **mediocrity** has been the most equal result. **In attempting better equality, the goal should not be to pull everyone down to the lowest common denominator. We should, instead, be aspiring to help those who are behind to seek a higher standard.**

Didn't we read somewhere that "charity begins at home"? Can't we help failing students at a local level with caring volunteers from our own communities? And can't we solve such problems in our own communities without the need for contrived "community organizers" directed from somewhere else and with someone else's agenda? I believe finding solutions to our own problems was the original spirit of America, wasn't it? And I believe it still is in many places and in many people.

But as that part of government which is farthest removed from our communities, in its power-grabbing and controlling, continues to adversely affect the quality of our children's education, it is creating dependents of those children.

Maybe this so-called shutdown will demonstrate to people that we really can do so much without government intervention. That includes strengthening education. Let's take back local control over our communities and our schools and, in doing that, let's ultimately take back our freedom.