

A People Held Hostage

- Dan Rosenberg

It seems like twice a year, over the past few years, America has had the threat of a government shutdown looming, like a storm-cloud on the horizon. And yet, every time, we've managed to escape relatively unscathed, with Congress striking an eleventh hour deal, or pushing the issue further down the line. But for once, it seems like we will not be so lucky; as of this writing, the government seems destined for a partial shutdown within 24 hours. And, every time the possibility of a shutdown comes around, the question I have to ask is why; why is the threat of a shutdown being used? Why is Congress, a legislative body that is directly elected to directly represent the American people, holding our own livelihoods hostage? I take serious issue with the idea that American jobs, and American lives, can be used as a bargaining chip in political fights. We don't elect a party to office; we elect a man, a person, who is supposed to act not in the interest of his political party, or in the interest of his wealthiest lobbyist, but rather in accord with the wishes and wellbeing of the very people who elected him. I don't have a problem with debate in Congress, and I don't have a problem with congressmen disagreeing. But I can't stand the idea that our elected officials care more about squabbles over policy than the needs of the American people.

The most ironic part about a government shutdown, of course, is the fact that, while many government workers will be furloughed without pay, Congress runs with no interruption, no docking of pay, and no furloughing. So, while you won't be able to visit a national park during the government shutdown, you will be able to see the wild spectacle that is America's legislative body. You might not be able to see priceless works of art in the Smithsonian museums, as they'll all be closed, but you can most definitely tune in to CNN or NBC to see Ted Cruz and Harry Reid arguing with each other, on the taxpayers' dollars of course.

There are no major elections in the Senate or House of Representatives for well over a year. By that time, I'm sure that someone will have compromised over Obamacare, and the government will have come out of shutdown. I'm sure that there will be many new issues which Congress has failed to agree on, and many new challengers to the incumbents of today. For me, that next election will be the first in which I can vote. And while I'm confident many people will have forgotten the current Congress's sheer ineptitude, and its ignorance of the wants and needs of the American people, I implore you to at least think on this; is it better to have someone in office who votes along the people's wishes, or on party lines?