

The Breakfast Table Times

THE DAY'S NEWS, IN FULL

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TOP STORY

Congress Passes Short-Term Funding Bill To Avert Shutdown Before Midterms

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Lawmakers in Washington reached a last-minute agreement this week to keep the federal government funded, avoiding a shutdown just weeks before the November midterm elections. The House passed a short-term spending bill that keeps agencies running while negotiations continue on a longer-term budget. The vote came after weeks of tense negotiations between Democratic and Republican leaders. Some lawmakers criticized the bill as only a temporary fix.

The agreement follows a partial government shutdown earlier this year that lasted less than four days before lawmakers reached a deal to reopen agencies. That earlier shutdown left thousands of federal workers without pay for several days and delayed some government services. Both parties have said they want to avoid a repeat of that disruption so close to Election Day. Federal employee unions welcomed news of the funding deal, saying it protects paychecks for now.

Congressional leaders say the short-term bill buys time for a broader budget agreement, though key disagreements remain over spending levels and policy provisions. Political analysts note that shutdowns close to elections can carry real risks for whichever party voters blame. Both chambers of Congress must still agree on full-year spending bills before the temporary measure expires. Voters may factor the funding fight into their decisions in November.

BACKGROUND

Government shutdowns occur when Congress fails to pass spending bills before funding deadlines, forcing many federal agencies to pause nonessential operations. The United States has experienced several shutdowns in recent years, ranging from a few days to over a month. This year's earlier shutdown, in February, was one of the shorter disruptions in recent memory.

Why it matters: *How Congress handles funding fights can shape public opinion heading into elections, especially when voters experience direct effects like delayed services or missed paychecks. The timing of this agreement, just before the midterms, adds political pressure on both parties to avoid blame for any disruption. The outcome could also influence which party controls Congress next year.*

What to watch: *Watch for continued negotiations on a full-year budget before the short-term bill expires. Also watch how voters respond to the funding fight as Election Day approaches in November.*

Source: NBC News ([nbcnews.com/politics/congress/senate-leaders-reach-deal-avert-shutdown-2026-elections-rcna590564](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/senate-leaders-reach-deal-avert-shutdown-2026-elections-rcna590564)); ABC7 New York (abc7ny.com/post/us-government-shutdown-update-2026-house-passes-short-term-funding-bill-avoid-before-election/19776082/); Government Executive (govexec.com/management/2026/02/partial-shutdown-ends-less-four-days-after-it-began/411160/)

NATION & WORLD

Poll Suggests Shutdown Fight Could Hurt Republicans In Midterms

BOSTON, MASS. — A new poll suggests that the recent government shutdown fight could pose political risks for Republicans heading into the November midterm elections. Researchers at Northeastern University's College of Social Sciences and Humanities examined how voters reacted to the funding standoff and its aftermath. The survey found notable frustration among respondents about the political fighting in Washington. The poll surveyed a broad sample of likely voters across several states.

Pollsters say voters often hold the party they see as responsible for a shutdown accountable at the ballot box, particularly when disruptions affect everyday services or paychecks. This year's earlier shutdown, which lasted less than four days, may have limited long-term damage compared to longer standoffs in past years. Even so, researchers say the issue remains salient for many voters as campaigns intensify. Some respondents said they would consider a candidate's role in the shutdown when voting this fall.

Both parties are closely watching survey data as they finalize campaign strategies for the fall. Strategists caution that a single poll rarely determines an election outcome, but it can signal which issues resonate with voters. Analysts expect more surveys to track public opinion on the funding fight as November approaches. Both parties have already begun adjusting their messaging in response to early polling data.

BACKGROUND

Polling organizations measure public opinion by surveying a representative sample of voters on current events and policy issues. Shutdown-related polls have historically shown shifts in approval ratings for the party seen as more responsible for the impasse.

Why it matters: *With control of Congress at stake in the midterms, even modest shifts in voter sentiment could affect close races nationwide. Understanding how the shutdown affected public opinion helps explain campaign strategies heading into November.*

What to watch: *Watch for additional polling data in the coming weeks, along with how candidates address the shutdown on the campaign trail.*

Source: Northeastern University College of Social Sciences and Humanities (cssh.northeastern.edu/republicans-get-warning-about-government-shutdown-in-new-poll/)

GOVERNMENT

Maine Voters Set To Decide Governor's Race And Senate Seat In November

AUGUSTA, MAINE — Maine voters will head to the polls this November to elect a new governor and decide a closely watched U.S. Senate race. Candidates from multiple parties have spent months campaigning across the state, visiting towns from the coast to northern Maine. Both races are expected to draw significant attention and spending before Election Day. Debates and town hall events have given voters opportunities to hear directly from candidates.

The governor's race will determine who leads the state after the current term ends, while the Senate contest could influence the balance of power in Washington. Political analysts consider Maine's Senate race one of several competitive contests nationally this cycle. Local issues such as the economy, healthcare, and energy costs have featured prominently in candidate platforms. Outside groups have also spent heavily on advertising in both races.

Election officials are preparing for what they expect to be strong voter turnout given the high-profile nature of both races. Absentee and early voting procedures remain available for residents who cannot vote in person on Election Day. Campaigns on both sides are expected to intensify their outreach efforts in the final weeks before November. Voters can find registration deadlines and polling locations through the Maine Secretary of State's office.

BACKGROUND

Maine holds gubernatorial elections every four years, while U.S. Senate seats come up on a rotating six-year cycle. This year both races land on the same November ballot, drawing added statewide attention.

Why it matters: *The outcomes will shape state policy on issues like taxes and education, while also potentially affecting which party controls the U.S. Senate. National groups have taken interest in Maine's races given their potential impact on Washington.*

What to watch: *Watch for additional debates, new polling, and campaign spending as both races head toward November's election.*

Source: Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Maine_gubernatorial_election); Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_United_States_Senate_election_in_Maine); Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_Maine_elections)

MONEY & WORK

Federal Workers Received Back Pay After Brief Shutdown Earlier This Year

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Earlier this year, a partial federal government shutdown left thousands of workers without paychecks for several days before lawmakers reached a funding agreement. The shutdown, which lasted less than four days, was shorter than several previous funding lapses in recent years. Even so, it disrupted pay schedules and some government services during that period. Workers in agencies ranging from national parks to federal offices felt the impact.

Once the government reopened, federal employees received back pay for the time they missed, a practice generally guaranteed for workers during shutdowns. Agencies also had to catch up on delayed paperwork, permits, and other services that were paused during the closure. Economists note that even short shutdowns can create ripple effects for workers and the local economies that depend on federal spending. Some employees also faced delays with routine expenses like rent and utility payments.

This week's new short-term funding deal aims to prevent a similar disruption before the November elections. Federal employee unions have expressed support for measures that protect paychecks and reduce uncertainty around government funding. Lawmakers say they hope to reach a longer-term budget agreement before the current funding measure expires. Both parties say avoiding another shutdown remains a shared priority ahead of the elections.

BACKGROUND

Federal law generally requires that furloughed and excepted employees receive back pay once a shutdown ends, a protection strengthened after past funding lapses. Even with this guarantee, workers can face real financial strain while waiting for delayed paychecks.

Why it matters: *Shutdowns affect far more than politics in Washington, touching paychecks, government services, and local economies that rely on federal spending. Even short funding lapses can create lasting uncertainty for workers and the agencies they serve.*

What to watch: *Watch whether Congress can reach a longer-term funding agreement before the current short-term bill expires.*

Source: Government Executive (govexec.com/management/2026/02/partial-shutdown-ends-less-four-days-after-it-began/411160/); Federal News Network (federalnewsnetwork.com/government-shutdown/2026/02/what-to-know-about-the-partial-government-shutdown-and-its-impact/)

SCIENCE & TECH

NASA Says Artemis II Moon Mission Remains On Track After Reviews

WASHINGTON, D.C. — NASA officials say the Artemis II mission remains on track after completing a round of technical and safety assessments this year. The mission is set to send four astronauts on a journey around the Moon without landing, marking the first crewed flight of NASA's Artemis program. It follows Artemis I, an earlier uncrewed test flight that circled the Moon and returned safely to Earth. The mission would not attempt a lunar landing, unlike the later Artemis III flight.

Engineers spent months analyzing data collected during that earlier test flight before clearing the new mission to move forward. Officials say the reviews focused on the performance of the spacecraft's heat shield, life-support systems, and other critical components needed to keep astronauts safe. NASA has emphasized that safety reviews, rather than a fixed calendar, will continue to guide the mission's timeline. NASA has also tested new procedures for astronaut training ahead of the flight.

Artemis II is widely viewed as a key step toward NASA's broader goal of returning astronauts to the lunar surface through the later Artemis III mission. Space agency officials have not yet announced an exact launch date, though preparations continue at NASA facilities around the country. The mission's progress will be closely watched by scientists, engineers, and space enthusiasts eager for its outcome. Many students and educators have used the mission as an opportunity to teach about space exploration.

BACKGROUND

Artemis II follows Artemis I, an uncrewed test flight launched in 2022 that verified the performance of NASA's new Orion spacecraft and Space Launch System rocket. Artemis II will be the first mission of the program to carry a human crew.

Why it matters: *A successful Artemis II mission would validate key spacecraft systems and clear the way for future lunar landing attempts. It also represents a significant milestone in NASA's long-term plans for sustained Moon exploration.*

What to watch: *Watch for NASA to announce a confirmed launch window and additional details about crew training in the coming months.*

Source: NASA (nasa.gov/missions/nasa-on-track-for-future-missions-with-initial-artemis-ii-assessments/); NASA (nasa.gov/artemis-ii-news-and-updates/)

SPORTS

Yankees Fall To Twins In Tight Late-Season Matchup

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN. — The New York Yankees suffered a narrow 5-4 loss to the Minnesota Twins on Wednesday night in a game that stayed close from start to finish. The result came during a critical stretch of the regular season, with both teams working to secure favorable playoff positioning. New York had opportunities to take the lead in the later innings but could not capitalize. Both teams entered the game separated by only a few games in the standings.

The Twins' offense provided just enough scoring to hold off a late Yankees push, sealing the one-run victory. Pitching depth and situational hitting have played major roles for both clubs as the season nears its conclusion. Manager and player comments after the game emphasized the importance of continuing to compete for every win down the stretch. Relief pitching also proved decisive in the late innings for both sides.

With the regular season winding down, every game carries added weight for teams still fighting for playoff spots. The Yankees will look to bounce back in their upcoming games as they aim to solidify their postseason chances. Fans and analysts alike are closely watching the standings as the final weeks of the season unfold. Postseason positioning could still shift significantly before the regular season ends.

BACKGROUND

The Yankees and Twins are both Major League Baseball teams competing for postseason spots as the 2026 regular season nears its end. Late-season matchups like this one often carry extra significance for playoff seeding.

Why it matters: Each win or loss in the season's final weeks can directly affect which teams qualify for the playoffs. Close games like this one highlight how thin the margins can be at this point in the season.

What to watch: Watch how the Yankees respond in their remaining games as the playoff picture becomes clearer.

Source: MLB.com (mlb.com/stories/game/823655); ESPN (espn.com/mlb/game/_/gameId/401816968/yankees-twins); MLB.com Gameday (mlb.com/gameday/yankees-vs-twins/2026/09/16/823655)

Giants' 2026 Season Underway As Team Faces Tough NFC East Slate

EAST RUTHERFORD, N.J. — The New York Giants' 2026 NFL season is now underway after the team released its full schedule earlier this year, highlighting matchups against longtime NFC East rivals the Dallas Cowboys, Philadelphia Eagles, and Washington Commanders. Fans and analysts have been watching closely to see how the roster performs under a new set of expectations. Early-season results often set the tone for how a team's year unfolds. The schedule also includes several nationally televised games that will draw wide attention.

Coaches have emphasized improvement on both sides of the ball after previous seasons fell short of postseason expectations. The Giants' path through a competitive division means several games against playoff-caliber opponents throughout the year. Team officials have expressed cautious optimism about the roster's depth and overall preparation heading into the season. Injuries and player development will also factor heavily into the team's success this year.

Division rivalries in the NFC East are historically some of the most closely contested in the NFL, and this season is expected to be no different. Analysts say the Giants' performance in divisional matchups will likely play a major role in determining their playoff chances. The team's early results will offer the first real indication of how the season may unfold. Fans will get a clearer picture of the team's potential after the first several weeks of play.

BACKGROUND

The Giants compete in the NFC East alongside the Cowboys, Eagles, and Commanders, one of the NFL's oldest and most competitive divisions. The team released its full 2026 schedule earlier this year ahead of the season opener.

Why it matters: A strong start can build momentum and confidence heading into a long NFL season, while a difficult stretch can create pressure on coaches and players. Division games often play an outsized role in determining playoff outcomes.

What to watch: Watch how the Giants perform in their upcoming divisional matchups as the season progresses.

Source: Giants.com (giants.com/news/nfl-schedule-2026-new-york-giants-tickets-information-cowboys-eagles-commanders); Wikipedia (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2026_New_York_Giants_season); NFL.com (nfl.com/schedules/2026/by-team/new-york-giants)

OUR TEAMS

New York Yankees Lost 4–5 to the Minnesota Twins

Wednesday, Sept. 16, 2026 — regular season game in Minneapolis

SOUTHERN MAINE

Cumberland Fair Opens As Fall Festival Season Begins Across Maine

CUMBERLAND, MAINE — Fall festival season has arrived in southern Maine, with the Cumberland Fair drawing crowds for its mix of rides, animal exhibitions, and local food vendors. The fair, a long-standing regional tradition, attracts families from across the area each year to celebrate the harvest season. Organizers say the event highlights Maine's agricultural roots while offering entertainment for visitors of all ages. The fairgrounds also host live music and craft demonstrations throughout the event.

Local farmers use the fair as an opportunity to showcase livestock, produce, and other agricultural products to the public. Vendors and small businesses also benefit from the increased foot traffic the fair brings to the region each September. Similar fall fairs are scheduled in towns across Maine throughout the coming weeks, continuing a tradition that dates back many decades. State agricultural officials often participate in fair events to promote local farming programs.

Community organizers say events like the Cumberland Fair play an important role in bringing neighbors together and supporting the local economy. Attendance figures in recent years have remained strong, reflecting continued interest in the fair's mix of tradition and entertainment. Visitors are encouraged to check local listings for exact dates and events as the fall fair season continues across the state. Many families treat the fair as an annual tradition marking the start of autumn.

BACKGROUND

Agricultural fairs like the Cumberland Fair have been part of Maine's fall traditions for well over a century, rooted in the state's farming history. Many of these fairs are organized by local agricultural societies with support from state agencies.

- Why it matters:** Fall fairs support local farmers and small businesses while strengthening community ties across Maine towns. They also help preserve agricultural traditions that have shaped the state's identity for generations.
- What to watch:** Watch local and state calendars for additional fall fair dates across Maine through October.

Source: Visit Maine (visitmaine.com/festivals-events/); Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (maine.gov/dacf/about/calendar/event.shtml)

GOOD NEWS

NASA Unveils Crew For Historic Artemis III Moon Landing Mission

WASHINGTON, D.C. — NASA has revealed the astronauts selected to fly on Artemis III, the mission planned to return humans to the lunar surface for the first time since the Apollo program ended decades ago. Officials say the crew has trained extensively to prepare for the mission's unique challenges, including a planned landing near the Moon's south pole. The announcement generated excitement among students, educators, and space enthusiasts across the country. Space agency leaders described the announcement as a major milestone for the Artemis program.

Artemis III builds on the earlier Artemis I and Artemis II missions, which tested spacecraft systems without attempting a landing. NASA has said the south pole region interests scientists because it may contain water ice that could support future long-term exploration. Officials have not confirmed an exact launch date, saying that safety reviews will continue to guide the mission's schedule. Mission planners say the timeline depends on the completion of new spacesuits and lunar landing technology.

The announcement comes as NASA continues to refine its long-term plans for returning astronauts to the Moon and eventually supporting missions to Mars. Officials say the Artemis program aims to establish a more sustained human presence on the lunar surface than earlier missions achieved. Many educators say the announcement offers a valuable opportunity to engage students in science and space exploration. NASA officials encouraged young people interested in science to follow the mission's progress in the coming years.

BACKGROUND

Artemis III would mark the first crewed Moon landing since the final Apollo mission in the 1970s. It follows years of preparation, including uncrewed and crewed test flights designed to validate new spacecraft technology.

- Why it matters:** A successful landing would represent a historic achievement in space exploration and could inspire renewed public interest in science and engineering. It would also test technology needed for future, longer-term missions beyond the Moon.
- What to watch:** Watch for updates on crew training milestones and an eventual confirmed launch date for the mission.

Source: Spaceflight Now (spaceflightnow.com/2026/06/09/live-coverage-nasa-to-unveil-artemis-3-crew-provide-updates-on-mission/); NASA+ (plus.nasa.gov/scheduled-video/nasas-artemis-iii-announcement/)