**Journal 17**

**How The Government Shutdown Is Impacting Young Americans**

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It's been a week. A week of furloughed workers and partisan bickering since the federal government shut down. And I'm asking Congress to end the impasse because even teenagers like myself are tired of years of Obama and Boehner trading jabs with each other.

In 2008, I was in fifth grade. I had no clue about the true nature of politics in our country, but I did have an inkling of faith in the federal government. I knew about a man named Barack Obama. I knew he had the potential to make history. But I didn't know he would have to work with one of the [least trusted](http://www.gallup.com/poll/165281/congress-job-approval-falls-amid-gov-shutdown.aspx" \t "_hplink) Congresses in history.

But in fifth grade, I didn't know a lot of things. After all, fifth grade me would never have dreamed of becoming the cynic that 10th grade me is. The fifth grade me lived in a time of hope and change; the 10th grade me lives in a time of hope to change. Change a political climate where Congress -- like elementary school children -- resorts to sitting sullenly on opposite ends of the playground instead of just sharing the proverbial jump rope.

I take that back: Elementary school children are (at times) more responsible. They respect their classmates, share their classroom, and listen to their teacher. While our congressmen, instead of respecting, [throw criticism](http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/post-politics/wp/2013/03/08/mccain-calls-paul-cruz-amash-wacko-birds/" \t "_hplink) at fellow politicians. Instead of sharing the floor, they ["filibuster"](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9EX2XkpPgE" \t "_hplink) largely for media attention. Instead of tending to their constituents, they prioritize personal gain. Children, on the other hand, give "happy holidays" cards even to the kid who stole their spot at lunch.

Which brings me to my main fear: our dysfunctional government's attitude is spilling over into the lives of my generation.

I first noticed it a couple of weeks ago on an ordinary Monday morning. The assistant principal's voice grated over the speakers as he recited the Pledge of Allegiance to an audience of barely awake high school students. It was an eerie scene, since almost all the students didn't say the pledge. It was only when he got to "... and justice for all" that the room erupted into chatter as chairs scraped forward and headphones were replaced. It was a stark contrast from how loudly we all used to recite the pledge as fifth graders.

But now, 10th graders and many of my friends -- like the Congress -- just don't seem to care anymore. In 2010, only [14 percent](http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/politically-apathetic-millennials/" \t "_hplink) of millennials could identify John Boehner as the Speaker of the House. These days, [63 percent](http://www.people-press.org/2013/09/30/anger-at-government-most-pronounced-among-conservative-republicans/" \t "_hplink) of us aren't even following the news relating to the government shutdown.

Media may blame us to be the ["The Me Me Me Generation"](http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2143001,00.html" \t "_hplink) but what if my generation's apathy was, in part, a reaction to the apathy of those who were elected to show concern? Tell me. Who is more "Me Me Me" than a government that shuts down because of ideology and [pride](http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2143001,00.html" \t "_hplink)? Who is more entitled than a Congress that allows [800,000 furloughs](http://www.cnbc.com/id/101091977" \t "_hplink) while basking comfortably in the rays of the 27th Amendment, which ensures that congressmen never lose their salary?

Washington has turned into a stage. It's the stage of fake smiles and faux concern, the stage where politicians new and old perfect the game, the stage where the audience is trapped watching even as the actors pretend they are alone. It's all hype. And even kids like me can see through it.

From Congress, all I ask is this: End the shutdown. Just do your job. Please take personal responsibility -- just like you expect school children to do. Only then will my peers and I once again recite the pledge as loudly as we used to do back in the fifth grade.

A high school sophomore wrote this article.

1. What do you think of the writer’s view of the government shutdown?
2. Have you felt any effects of the shutdown?
3. Have you followed what’s been going on? Why or why not?
4. What do you think of Congress’ behavior during this time?
5. Do you think how Congress acts affects how we act? Can it diminish or kindle pride in the country?
6. What do you think is the fix here?