



Written by [John Stossel](#) on October 4, 2023

Shut It Down!

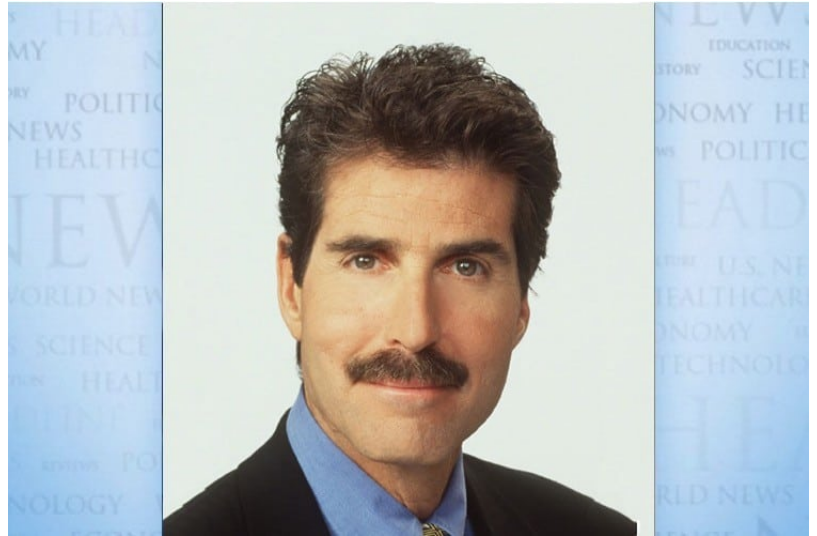
This week Republicans and Democrats got together to avert a government shutdown.

Too bad.

There's so much that *ought* to be shut down.

Useless Cabinet departments, for example, like Housing and Urban Development, Labor and Agriculture. Agriculture employs almost 100,000 people. Why? Independent farmers grow our food. They don't need a giant department.

Let's get rid of the Department of Education, too. Why does it even exist? Education is a local responsibility and none of the federal government's business. Yet its spending is up 300% over the last 10 years.



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The department didn't even exist before 1979. Has education improved since then? No. Government's grand plans, like No Child Left Behind and Common Core, helped no one but bureaucrats.

Trying to justify itself, the department funded studies of everyone's favorite government program, Head Start. The "experts" were surprised to learn that the much-praised program has no effect. By third grade, there was no difference between kids that attend and those who don't.

Education is best left to local governments and parents.

We don't need a Commerce Department. After all, commerce just happens. Get rid of the bureaucrats and sell the buildings. Get rid of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services.

I know, Medicare is popular. "Free" stuff always is. But government's current health promises are unsustainable. As we live longer and want the newest and best medicines, Medicare is on track to go broke.

I'm on Medicare. I get *everything* my doctor suggests. I never even ask about price. That's insane.

Medicare and Social Security take money from the young and give it to those of us who had decades to invest and save. That's just unfair.

Let people shop for free-market plans. Let the market work.

Once people pay their own bills, competition will drive prices down. Health care would be less confusing and bureaucratic.

Abolish the Food and Drug Administration. It's a big reason drugs are so expensive. It was created years ago when people were hurt by quack medicines. But today we have the internet; sites like Drugs.com let us decide for ourselves if we want to risk taking a drug.

Get rid of the Drug Enforcement Administration and the destructive War on Drugs. The DEA spends \$3 billion a year and does little but raise the price of drugs, switching users from drugs like heroin to deadlier things like fentanyl.



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Did we learn nothing from alcohol Prohibition? Banning liquor created Al Capone and organized crime. Today there are no beer gangs or vodka cartels only because alcohol is legal.

The drug warriors' rules don't protect us from drugs. They mostly enrich murderous drug cartels.

Get rid of subsidies for NPR and PBS.

Kill the Export-Import Bank and the Small Business Administration. Businesses should operate on their own. They shouldn't get handouts and dubious advice from government bureaucrats.

Privatize air traffic control. Canada and dozens of other countries already did, and their systems are safer and work better. That would save \$2 billion, and your flight would be more likely to arrive on time.

Likewise, privatize Amtrak. Save \$7 billion.

Privatize the post office. Today there are lots of better alternatives.

Of course, I'm dreaming. Government programs don't get shut down. They just grow.

Washington claims every one of its activities is crucially important. But that's nonsense.

If the Nov. 17 deadline isn't met and the government shuts down, will you even notice?

Few outside the media and the Washington bureaucracy noticed the last shutdown.

Social Security, Medicare, the Postal Service, air traffic control, the passport agency and irresponsible lending to college students will continue during a "government shutdown."

Democrats, sleazily, say they'd close national parks. That's a government product that people definitely like. But they are *outdoors!* It's stupid to close the gates (Donald Trump didn't close them when government shut down during his term).

They'll close parks because Democrats and many Republicans want to convince us that everything good comes from government.

It doesn't.

Go ahead. Shut most of it down.

Every Tuesday at [JohnStossel.com](https://www.johnstossel.com), Stossel posts a new video about the battle between government and freedom.

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