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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Commander thankful shutdown is halted

Dellinger says ground must be regained on the claims backlog as elected leaders work toward a lasting solution to the funding crisis.

WASHINGTON (Oct. 17, 2013) -- American Legion National Commander Daniel M. Dellinger expressed relief Thursday after a 16-day partial shutdown of the U.S. government came to an end at midnight. The shutdown had idled thousands of Department of Veterans Affairs Regional Offices throughout the country and threatened to suspend disability payments to veterans at the end of this month.

"On behalf of our nation's veterans, I am thankful that the U.S. government has reopened," Dellinger said. "The American Legion and all veterans were certainly difference-makers in this temporary resolution. Veterans, members of the U.S. Armed Forces and their families should not have been made to suffer or worry about how they were going to pay their bills, feed their families or stay in school during this standoff. Congress and the White House have to work together now to find a lasting solution before last night's agreement expires."

Dellinger added that VA claims processors and The American Legion's service officers, many of whom were denied access to federal buildings during the shutdown, must work quickly to regain lost ground in serving the nation's veterans, particularly those waiting for decisions on VA benefits claims. "We were finally seeing progress against the VA backlog when the shutdown began," Dellinger said. "Now, VA must get back to work and – with help of The American Legion's nearly 3,000 service officers nationwide – regain momentum and continue reducing the backlog. In the meantime, VA employees, The American Legion and the entire military and veterans communities will be looking to our nation's elected leaders to achieve a lasting solution."

With nearly 2.4 million members, The American Legion is the nation's largest veterans service organization.

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