

Shutdown has an impact in Dubuque Archdiocese

Republican-Democrat impasse being felt here

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DUBUQUE — It is the households of the poorest and most vulnerable among us that the impact of the continuing government shutdown hits the hardest. The full impact of the shutdown will not likely be felt for several months. However, Catholic Charities and the Archdiocese of Dubuque are now making preparations for the potential “second disaster.”

“We are assessing the needs of the communities we serve to determine how Catholic Charities and the archdiocese may be able to help front-line, direct assistance providers of food, rental and utility assistance,” states Tracy Morrison, Catholic Charities executive director.

On Friday, Oct. 4, Catholic Charities was notified by Migration and Refugee Services, the agency’s refugee resettlement contractor and the largest provider of refugee services in the United States, that a moratorium has been issued on refugee travel until Oct. 21 due to the uncertainty of the availability of services and benefits for arriving refugees. The moratorium will impact 1,100 cases scheduled for resettlement between now and Oct. 21, including 12 scheduled for resettlement in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.

Stephen Schmitz, Catholic Charities programs director, points out that these

people are wives, husbands and children who will now remain in camps until they can repeat the steps needed to travel.

“Their arrival is not simply delayed,” he said. “They will be required to get back in line and begin again and fear their hopes of resettling in the United States was a fleeting dream.”

A Burmese refugee from Columbus Junction expressed heartbreak over the news that he would not be celebrating the long-awaited reunification with his wife, as scheduled, next week.

The Women, Infant and Children (WIC) supplemental programs are barely holding on. At this time they continue to provide limited services for current enrollees; however, no new applications are being accepted.

If the government shutdown lasts throughout October, roughly 66,000 Iowa WIC recipients will not get coupons this month, according to Jill Lange, statewide director of the WIC program for Iowa.

Fifty-three percent of all infants born in the United States rely on WIC. The food-stamp program, SNAP, is in the same situation, with no new enrollees being accepted. Metro Catholic Outreach, a food bank cooperative of the Cedar Rapids Catholic churches, reports a 25 percent increase in requests for food since the shutdown.

Prayers are requested for Congress that they might find common ground for the common good and reach consensus on key budget and debt ceiling issues, and pray for our poor and vulnerable that they may find the resources they need during this time of struggle.