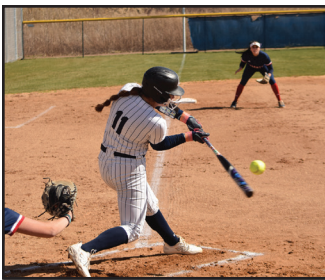




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Shutdown sparks airport disruptions

By Brianna Wallen
News Editor

Following spring break, many airline passengers may have had to deal with unusually long security lines, flight delays and the presence of ICE agents.

According to reports from PBS News, a combination of Transportation Security Administration staffing shortages and a partial federal government shutdown created widespread disruptions at major U.S. airports, forcing travelers to arrive hours earlier than normal and wait through extended screening lines.

“Nearly 500 of the agency’s nearly 50,000 officers have quit since the shutdown started,” according to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

These TSA employees who are responsible for airport security across the country have been working without pay since Feb. 14, when a partial government shutdown began.

According to NBC News, the shutdown resulted from a funding lapse for DHS due to a disagreement between Democrats and Republicans over proposed changes to Immigration and Customs Enforcement policies, including requirements for signed judicial warrants and restrictions on agents wearing masks.

With TSA workers going without pay for



PHOTO | ALYSSA POINTER/REUTERS

ICE agents walking in Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport as passengers wait in a TSA line in Atlanta, Georgia on March 23.

over 40 days and without a clear end in sight, the number of employees not showing up for work has continued to climb.

According to TSA officials, TSA call-out rates on March 26 reached nearly 12%, the highest level recorded since the start of the shutdown.

At individual airports, call-outs have surged at an even faster pace.

“At John F. Kennedy International Airport, TSA officers averaged a 21% absence rate during the shutdown, the highest among major airports,” TSA reports states.

While TSA employees

have been working for an extended period without pay, ICE agents have remained unaffected.

According to NPR, paychecks for sworn law enforcement officers at ICE, Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Secret Service are currently being covered through the bill, as Congress previously set aside an additional \$75 billion in funding for the agency last summer.

To combat these extensive delays, ICE sent hundreds of agents to 14 airports in an effort to reduce disruptions, according to CNN.

“But while the ICE agents have been spotted in Atlanta, New York, Houston, Chicago and other cities, officials have said they are limited in what duties they can perform: They are not trained, for example, to operate the understaffed security checkpoints that are often the source of delays,” CNN said.

Although ICE agents were deployed to help manage airport traffic, they also have the authority to make arrests.

“They love it because they’re able to arrest illegals as they come into the country. That’s very

fertile territory, but that’s not why they’re there; they’re really there to help,” Trump told CNN reporters.

This highlights the tension between ICE’s enforcement responsibilities and its temporary role in supporting airport operations during ongoing staffing challenges.

This situation not only heightens anxiety for travelers but also creates uncertainty and fear among TSA employees.

“Some TSA workers who are immigrants are also concerned they may be detained by ICE if

they show up to work,” TSA Council 100’s Secretary-Treasurer Johnny Jones said to CNN.

TSA officials warn that extended funding shortages could cause long-term damage to the screening workforce since employees who are unable to afford basic living costs may decide to quit their jobs.

“It can take months to replace those officers because of the four to six months of training required before employees are able to work independently at checkpoints,” ABC News said.

Overall, TSA staffing shortages combined with the temporary use of ICE agents have made airports a more complex and hectic environment during a peak travel season.

To address the crisis, Trump issued an executive order directing DHS to immediately restore pay to TSA officers using emergency funding sources.

According to PBS News, the administration argued that paying TSA workers was necessary to stabilize airport security and reduce delays.

On Friday, March 27, DHS stated to CBS News that, at the direction of Trump, “TSA has immediately begun the process of paying its workforce.”

The department also stated that TSA officers are expected to start receiving pay as early as Monday, March 30.

Civic engagement event promotes student voices

By Victoria Cruz
News Writer

On Friday, March 27, the University Access Program hosted another installment of UAP Fridays with a Purpose titled Civic Engagement: Because Your Voice Matters In Your Career and Community.

Presented by Jonathan L. Wharton, associate professor in the political science and urban affairs department and sociology department chairman, the event opened with an interactive survey designed to engage students and encourage reflection from the start.

“I am not very familiar with this topic, and it is not talked about much. I want to learn what civic engagement is all about and learn how I can be involved in my community,” nursing major Maria Gonzalez, a sophomore, said.

The conversation began with introducing the concept of political socialization, prompting attendees to think about social networks that have shaped their civic awareness.

While civic engagement often begins at an early age, it tends to decline during college years, as students become focused on academics and other responsibilities.

Discussion then shifted to patterns of civic participation, particularly among younger voters.

Data shared during the event revealed that voter turnout for individuals aged 18–30 is significantly lower than older generations.

According to this data, only 38% of young people participated in presidential elections and closer to 18% in local elections. In contrast, older populations can reach turnout levels of up to 60%. Only half of the students in attendance reported that they had voted.

Within Connecticut, towns such as Glastonbury, Wethersfield and West Hartford reported some of the highest voter participation rates, often correlating with higher levels of home ownership and education.

Meanwhile, cities like Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven tend to experience lower turnout, particularly within Black and Latino communities.

A key takeaway from the discussion was that many students feel they lack the capacity or knowledge to engage in civic life.

Wharton emphasized that civic engagement requires intentional effort and action as well as an understanding of why participation is necessary.

Attendees discussed practical ways to become more engaged, including attending city meetings, writing testimonies, volunteering, campaigning and participating in demonstrations.

Students were also encouraged to engage in conversation with others, even when they are unsure of their own opinions.

By asking questions and understanding different perspectives, individuals can become more informed and take meaningful steps toward participation.

In Connecticut, where unaffiliated voters cannot participate in party primaries, students discussed the implications of political affiliation.

This became a topic of discussion because more young voters choose to remain independent in a system where many elections are effectively decided during primaries.

Ultimately, the event emphasized that civic engagement begins with awareness but requires action and intention.

“It’s important for a population to have political efficacy and know that their vote and contribution to their community counts. It’s important to learn ways you can practice that,” Gonzalez said.

Students were encouraged to stay informed, participate in both their hometowns and in New Haven and build communities that support civic involvement.

“I should be more involved in my local town and with things that are happening, and I don’t pay attention enough. Knowing how easy it is to start makes it feel easier,” graphic design major Johanna Sampedro, a junior, said.

Knowledge is only valuable when it is actively used, and students have more power than they may realize to create change within the communities they are a part of.



PHOTOS | VICTORIA CRUZ

Jonathan L. Wharton, political science and urban affairs associate professor, leading the civic engagement event on Friday, March 27 in Engleman Hall Room 253.



Students listening to Jonathan L. Wharton, political science and urban affairs associate professor, present ways they can use their voice in the community.