

DSS: Fed Shutdown to Become Very Real

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The Federal Government shutdown is about to get very real for 150 daycare families, and another 2000 local families are about to lose their food stamps, according to Jim Atkinson of Watauga DSS at last night's Watauga Commission meeting. He said, "One of the things that we're going to need to do is send out notices to all of the 150 families, cases that we have in child daycare, to suspend their services in daycare and let them know to start looking for other options." He went on to say, "This has an effect not only on families of 300 kids and 150 families that we serve, but also on the 38 daycare centers we pay subsidies to. Many of them are not going to be able to stay open as a result. And, of course, the businesses that rely on the employees that are going to have to quit their jobs or find some other arrangements." County Manager Deron Geouque said that the very short-term cost for Watauga for a stop-gap funding of the loss is over a half million dollars in a month—money we may not be reimbursed for with a federal government resumption. The entire situation brought the national bickering to the local level, with Democratic commissioner Billy Kennedy wanting the board to notify congresswoman Virginia Foxx of the local plight, "She should know that there are 300 kids in her county that are going to lose child care." But Republican commissioner David Blust pointed out that the Democrats hold 67% of the government, "Don't make it political saying she's making this decision...but you're inferring that she's making these decisions up there and that's why we've got these problems." In the end, there is no fall-back for these families, and the cost to all of us may soon be very real.