

Congress Closes Federal Offices; Parkway

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The Federal Government made it official early this morning—the government is essentially closed. The impasse over the budget and the Affordable Care Act—which goes into effect today in spite of the shutdown—led to the action. And coming on the first day of October, means that US Parks officials will begin closing down Blue Ridge Parkway facilities, beginning today. Chief Ranger for our area, Steve Stinnett said yesterday that they will give campers 48 hours notice, but that with the leaf season approaching, campgrounds were a sellout for this weekend. But now those campgrounds, lodges and visitors centers will be closed. His law enforcement officers will stay on the job, he said—but the action is much less severe than plans put forward earlier in the day yesterday, plans that would have closed and locked all the gates along the parkway.