

Uncle Sam's rent checks are in the mail



by **RICHARD MIZE**

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Until Friday's temporary fix for the partial federal government shutdown, the General Services Administration, the government's in-house real estate services/design and construction/facilities management/bill payer was on the verge of freaking out.

I imagine some lessors were about to lose it, too.

The GSA pays the rent for government agencies, including the FBI, which leases its whole 110,000-square-foot Oklahoma City field office building at 3301 W Memorial Road, and Immigration & Customs Enforcement, which leases space in at least two private office buildings.

I imagine that until rent payments were threatened because of general contention and political animosity over the border (and how many walls are enough), there was no more reliable lessee in the world than the GSA acting for the USA, what with its full faith and credit on the line every time the rent was due.

With the shutdown, January rent payments due in early February were in limbo.

Norman Dong, a managing director at FD Stonewater in Arlington, Virginia, and a former commissioner of the General Services Administration's Public Buildings Service, brought some historic perspective in remarks earlier this week in a piece for the National Federal Development Association, which he serves as a board member.

"In the past, there have been 20 instances of a Federal Government shutdown, with the first one taking place under the Ford Administration," he wrote. "Never before has the Federal Government faced such a real and significant threat of delaying payments for its privately leased space.

"As we continue into these uncharted waters, it is helpful to see a potential solution for the Government to fund the next cycle of rental payments and avoid significant disruption and consequence, at least in the short-term."

A "short term" fix apparently is what we got Friday.

Not lost on some people, whether regular federal funding returns or not, is that the standoff over the wall was a threat not only to lots of everyday people, but two of the agencies charged with protecting them, including border protection: the FBI and ICE.



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