

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

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16 Ways The Automatic Budget Cuts Could Affect Arkansas (Arkansas Business)

LITTLE ROCK - The White House has detailed the potential fallout in each state from budget cuts set to take effect at week's end, while congressional Republicans and Democrats keep up the sniping over who's to blame.

The White House compiled the numbers from federal agencies and its own budget office. The numbers are based only on the \$85 billion in cuts for this fiscal year, from March-September, that are set to take effect Friday.

As to whether states could move money around to cover shortfalls, the White House said that depends on state budget structures and the specific programs. The White House did not have a list of which states or programs might have flexibility.

EDUCATION:

1. Arkansas will lose approximately \$5.9 million in funding for primary and secondary education, putting around 80 teacher and aide jobs at risk. In addition about 10,000 fewer students would be served and approximately 30 fewer schools would receive funding.
2. About \$5.6 million in funds for about 70 teachers, aides, and staff who help children with disabilities.
3. About 380 fewer low income students in Arkansas would receive aid to help them finance the costs of college and around 110 fewer students will get work-study jobs that help them pay for college.
4. Head Start and Early Head Start services would be eliminated for approximately 600 children in Arkansas, reducing access to critical early education.

ENVIRONMENT:

5. About \$1.6 million in environmental funding to ensure clean water and air quality, as well as prevent pollution from pesticides and hazardous waste.
6. About \$842,000 in grants for fish and wildlife protection.

DEFENSE:

7. About 4,000 civilian Department of Defense employees would be furloughed, reducing gross pay by around \$19.2 million in total.

LAW ENFORCEMENT:

8. About \$159,000 in Justice Assistance Grants that support law enforcement, prosecution and courts, crime prevention and education, corrections and community corrections, drug treatment and enforcement, and crime victim and witness initiatives.

EMPLOYEMENT ASSISTANCE:

9. About \$273,000 in funding for job search assistance, referral, and placement, meaning around 9,850 fewer people will get the help and skills they need to find employment.

CHILD CARE:

10. Up to 200 disadvantaged and vulnerable children could lose access to child care, which is also essential for working parents to hold down a job.

11. About 1,140 fewer children will receive vaccines for diseases such as measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, whooping cough, influenza, and Hepatitis B due to reduced funding for vaccinations of about \$78,000.

PUBLIC HEALTH:

13. Arkansas will lose approximately \$279,000 in funds to help upgrade its ability to respond to public health threats including infectious diseases, natural disasters, and biological, chemical, nuclear, and radiological events.

14. About \$660,000 in grants to help prevent and treat substance abuse, resulting in around 200 fewer admissions to substance abuse programs. And the Arkansas State Department of Health will lose about \$84,000 resulting in around 2,100 fewer HIV tests.

15. STOP Violence Against Women Program could lose up to \$62,000 in funds that provide services to victims of domestic violence, resulting in up to 200 fewer victims being served.

16. Arkansas would lose approximately \$310,000 in funds that provide meals for seniors.

Fort Smith Schools Facing \$600,000-Plus In Cuts (Southwest Times Record, Fort Smith)

The superintendent of Fort Smith schools said Monday his district stands to lose at least \$600,000 if billions in indiscriminate budget cuts are not quelled by Congress this week.

“It’s very frustrating,” Superintendent Benny Gooden said during a Fort Smith School Board meeting. “We sent people to Washington. We ought to really get them to take care of business.”

In November, the School Board approved a resolution urging Congress to amend the Budget Control Act to avoid sequestration.

“School districts such as Fort Smith enrolling high percentages of economically disadvantaged students, and students whose native language is not English, will be disproportionately impacted by the cuts,” the resolution states.

That resolution, Gooden said, was “sent to everybody we thought would look at it.”

“We’ve tried to send a hard message about sequestration and the fact it’s a pretty mindless and lazy way to address financial issues,” he said. “It appears, if I can believe what I read in the paper and see on TV, that Congress is not going to do one thing before Friday.”

The Budget Control Act of 2011 originally contained a trigger for \$1.2 trillion in across-the-board “sequestration” cuts Jan. 1 to reduce the national deficit over the next decade.

“Because they, as they say in Washington, kicked the can down the road from Jan. 1 to March, the cut, instead of being 8 percent, is going to be 5.3 percent,” Gooden said. “According to my calculations, and that’s all they are, the effect on the Fort Smith School District will be about \$623,000.”

The largest education hit would be to public school districts, like Fort Smith, serving large populations of students from low-income families, according to the National Education Association.

“The good news is we’ve done some preparation,” Gooden said. “We held back some state-targeted money last year. We’ll be able to partially sustain the programs we have out there.”

Also Monday, dozens of students were recognized for various achievements.

A team of 25 Chaffin Junior High students was honored for taking top state honors in the national Knowledge Master Open academic contest.

The Southside High School Science Bowl Team of five was recognized for winning the 2013 Arkansas Science Bowl Championship. It was the seventh title for the program since 2002.

Southside High School Majorettes won first place in the High School Halftime Team competition at the Arkansas Twirling Festival in Conway in January.

Nine high school musicians were honored for becoming 2013 All-State First Chair Musicians.

An instructor, Dennis Burton, was given the Distinguished Director award by the Arkansas Choral Directors Association at the All-State Music Conference.

Little Rock Public Meets Superintendent Finalist Hathorn (KARK, Channel 4)

Monday's, this is the first of four interview days set up by the Little Rock School District for the public, parents, and an advisory council to meet and greet with each of the finalists, so they can ask questions and form an informed opinion when the decision needs to be made.

"I'm proud to be back in Arkansas," said Dr. Connie Hathorn.

Hathorn is currently the superintendent in Youngstown, Ohio. He was front and center as the public asked questions about how he would do things differently in the Little Rock District.

"What do you see as your top five leadership qualities?" a question was asked from the public.

Despite currently overseeing a much smaller school district, Hathorn pointed to past experience in Akron, Ohio, overseeing curriculum, hiring, and student services for some 30,000-plus students.

When it comes to combating a lack of parental involvement, Hathorn suggested making the district a more welcoming place for families, and he sees gaps in student achievement that need to be immediately addressed.

"Keep in mind that whoever comes won't be able to be here until July first, so the program is already in place. But what I could do is create a sense of urgency, higher expectations for our students and hold people accountable for the job they are supposed to do," Hathorn said.

There are three more interview days those are on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week, and the final meeting on March 4th.

Greenwood Student Named Distinguished Finalist (Southwest Times Record, Fort Smith)

Like a good, smiling neighbor, Hailey Flatte is there to lend a hand.

Instead of sleeping in on Saturday mornings or allowing Facebook to swallow all of her post-school hours, the Greenwood High School senior has spent the last few years volunteering her time at the Greenwood Recycling Center and tutoring younger students.

One of the 18-year-old Flatte's ongoing volunteer efforts included her "Distracted Driving Awareness" project, a day-long program she started that resulted in the recognition of Distracted Driving Awareness Day on Nov. 11 each year in Greenwood. This project, along with Flatte's other volunteer projects, helped her be named a Distinguished Finalist for the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards' Top Youth Volunteer title.

"I was really surprised by the award because I had applied for it awhile back and almost forgot about it because of doing school work and stuff," said Flatte, who lives with her mother, Jodee Flatte, in Fort Smith. "I got really excited because my school counselor said that this is the first time this has happened for anyone in Greenwood.

"It's a scholarship but there's no money," she added before laughing. "It's great they recognize Distinguished Finalists, and I've never been happier at not winning money in my life."

For her "Distracted Driving Awareness" project, Flatte partnered with Allstate Insurance in Greenwood and designed T-shirts for 77 Greenwood students to wear to school one day in November 2011. The shirts represented the 77 students who are killed in car accidents each week because of distractions, she said.

"These car-accident statistics don't even include texting," Flatte said. "These numbers are of those who are distracted while driving."

Flatte asked students from different grades to wear the shirts to school on that designated day. She also requested that each student wearing a shirt to remain silent throughout the school day.

"Even if a teacher called upon them, the students couldn't talk; they were representing those 77 students killed in accidents," Flatte said. "Allstate Insurance also gave out handouts that had information on them."

Flatte said she initially worried what her classmates would think the 77 shirts "were lame," but she quickly recognized the potential impact the project could have on the school and community.

"Everyone thought it was a cool project," she said. "Their parents started talking about it, and the parents got ahold of our video for the project and put it on Facebook so other people could watch it."

Flatte joked that business is her middle name. She is a vice president and district secretary for Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, as well as a member of the Future Business Leaders of America, the Greenwood Robotics program and the National Honor Society, among other programs and groups.

Set to graduate in May, Flatte plans to major in biomedical engineering at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and become a dentist. She said her call to give back to her community most likely won't fade in the coming years.

"I'd like to do the program that's similar to Doctors without Borders; it's a program for dentists," Flatte said. "I like helping people — a lot."

Legislative summary (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — This is a summary list of bills (by bill number, lead sponsor and title) introduced through Monday in the 89th General Assembly, except for appropriation bills, which, along with other bills and resolutions, may be found at the legislative website: www.arkleg.state.ar.us

HOUSE

HB1440, Shepherd - An act to make available to certain officials the registry at the Arkansas Crime Information Center that lists all persons who were adjudicated to have a mental disease or defect or were involuntarily committed.

HB1441, Collins - To reduce Arkansas taxes.

HB1442, Collins - To reduce the income tax rates for individuals, trusts, and estates.

HB1443, Collins - To reform the Arkansas tax system.

HB1444, Collins - To reduce or repeal certain taxes.

HB1445, Collins - To reduce the income tax on capital gains.

HB1446, Fite - Concerning required Child Maltreatment Central Registry checks for adoption; and the placement and adoption of children.

HB1447, Fite - To amend the Child Maltreatment Act.

HB1448, Fite - To provide for permanent no contact orders upon a conviction for certain criminal offenses.

HB1449, Fite - Concerning the sentence enhancement for domestic battering in the first, second, or third degree.

HB1450, Fite - To amend the offense of aggravated assault on a family or household member.

HB1451, Fite - To amend the Child Maltreatment Act.

HB1456, S. Meeks - To require utilities to compensate net-metering customers for net excess generation credits in certain circumstances.

HB1457, Ballinger - To revise the procedures for conducting a meeting of the State Board of Election Commissioners.

HB1458, Neal - To permit electronic proof of concealed handgun licensure.

HB1459, Neal - To allow the use of a hunter education certificate in an acceptable electronic format in lieu of a paper certificate.

HB1460, Neal - To require a valid driver's license for motor vehicle registration; and to require a system to link driver's license numbers and motor vehicle registration for certain vehicles.

HB1461, Linck - To amend sales and use tax laws to conform to the Streamlined Sales and Use Tax Agreement.

HB1462, E. Armstrong - To repeal a municipal political service statute.

HB1463, E. Armstrong - Concerning the filling of vacancies in certain municipal elective offices.

HB1464, E. Armstrong - Concerning the collection mechanism for the parks tax.

HB1465, E. Armstrong - To amend the law concerning municipal police chiefs.

HB1466, Ballinger - To amend the law concerning records maintained during early voting.

HB1467, Ballinger - To clarify the procedure for a member of the county board of election commissioners to file certain reports; and to declare a deadline for filing certain reports.

HB1468, Hammer - To require birthing facilities to perform pulse oximetry screenings for critical congenital heart disease on newborns before discharge.

HB1469, Clemmer - To clarify the requirements for generating and accepting electronic transcripts.

HB1470, Williams - To establish pre-adjudication probation programs.

HB1473, Ferguson - To create the Truth in Healthcare Practitioner Advertising Act.

HB1474, Lowery - To establish murder in the second degree as a 70 percent crime.

HB1475, Hawthorne - To authorize the issuance of a disabled veteran special motorcycle license plate.

HB1476, McLean - To amend various provisions of Arkansas Code Title 6 concerning public school transportation and academic facilities.

HB1477, McLean - To allow the curriculum frameworks for multiple courses to be combined or embedded in a single course.

HB1478, McCrary - To amend the definition of "feral hog"; to regulate the capturing, killing, and transporting of feral hogs; and to increase the penalties for releasing hogs into the wild.

SENATE

SB426, D. Sanders - An act to amend Arkansas law concerning the information contained in certain financial reports filed with the Arkansas Ethics Commission.

SB427, D. Sanders - To make amendments to the ethics laws of the State of Arkansas and amending portions of Arkansas law resulting from an initiated act.

SB432, R. Thompson - To change the population ratio to sell vinous, spirituous, or malt liquor off-premises.

SB433, R. Thompson - Concerning permanency planning hearings.

SB438, Teague - Concerning the revenues derived from the tax on distillate special fuels; to eliminate the designation of certain tax revenues derived from sales of distillate special fuels as general revenues.

SB440, J. Hendren - To amend the procurement requirements for nonvisual access technology; and to declare an emergency.

SB441, J. Key - To include veterans of Operation Urgent Fury as veterans entitled to a reduced-fee special license plate.

SB442, B. King - To provide for licensed qualified interpreters for individuals who are deaf, deaf blind, hard of hearing or oral deaf.

SB446, U. Lindsey - To increase the maximum job order contracting bid award amount.

SB455, Maloch - To clarify the health insurance payment process for orthotic devices and prosthetic services.

SB456, Elliott - To amend Arkansas laws governing educator licensure.

SB457, Elliott - To amend Arkansas laws governing background checks for educators, fiscal officers, nonlicensed school district staff and student teachers.

SB458, J. Hutchinson - To allow a school district to hire a certified speech-language pathologist who does not have a master's degree.

SB462, J. Dismang - To revise the Cemetery Act for perpetually maintained cemeteries.

SB463, J. Hendren - To create an exemption from the income tax for service pay or allowances received by active duty members of the armed services.

SB464, Rapert - To amend the Arkansas Life and Health Insurance Guaranty Association Act; and for other purposes.

SB474, K. Ingram - To create a standard concerning alcohol donations; to amend the rules for handling alcohol; to amend a permit requirement; to permit the sale of malt liquor; to permit a club to advertise and to repeal an unlawful practice.

Notable Resolutions

SR15, Rapert - To congratulate the University of Central Arkansas Bears football team for an outstanding 2012 season and for continuing excellence in academics.

Education notebook (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — 10-day time table estimated for trial

The parties in the 30-year-old Pulaski County school desegregation lawsuit expect that a federal court trial on the state's request to be released from the 1989 desegregation settlement agreement will take 10 days.

The attorney general's office Friday submitted to U.S. District Judge D. Price Marshall Jr. a proposed timetable for completing evidence discovery and submitting written arguments in the case. The state's lawyers prepared the proposed timetable in response to the judge's request that it be done and after conferring with the attorneys for the other parties in the lawsuit.

Attorneys for the state last year asked Marshall to release the state from its obligations under the desegregation settlement. Those obligations include the state's payment of about \$70 million a year in desegregation aid to the three Pulaski County school districts.

The Little Rock district filed its opposition to that release earlier this month.

According to the proposed timetable, the four-month discovery period for gathering facts and evidence to support each side's arguments would not begin until the Legislature adjourns, tentatively on April 19.

NLR district to get eatery appraisal

The North Little Rock School District will seek an appraisal of the Waffle House restaurant adjacent to the North Little Rock High School-West Campus to determine a purchase offer.

The district's School Board authorized Superintendent Ken Kirspel and his staff to get the appraisal.

The superintendent is also authorized by the School Board to discuss the possibility of purchasing the building through eminent domain. That is the right to take private property for public use without the owner's consent but with just compensation to the owner.

The school district is planning to expand the high school campus so that the school can serve grades nine through 12. It currently serves only 11th and 12th grades. The expansion is part of the district's \$266 million capital-improvement plan to construct or renovate nearly every campus in the 9,000-student district.

Sequester cuts will hurt, Arkansas officials say (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

WASHINGTON — Less than a week before automatic federal spending cuts are scheduled to take place, the White House released a snapshot showing how the reductions will be felt in Arkansas.

In Arkansas, military spending would be reduced by more than \$23 million; more than \$2 million would be cut for clean water efforts and other environmental programs; more than \$11 million would be cut from education programs.

The White House release was part of a state-by-state analysis of across-the-board cuts to a full range of federal programs that are scheduled to go into effect Friday.

“We cannot simply cut our way to prosperity, and if Republicans continue to insist on an unreasonable, cuts-only approach, Arkansas risks paying the price,” said the White House release.

Arkansas’ Republican lawmakers said President Barack Obama was simply trying to scare the American public in order to avoid making cuts necessary to move the federal budget closer to balance.

“The president is engaged in typical scare-mongering that liberals and bureaucrats do when faced with budget cuts,” said U.S. Rep. Tom Cotton of Dardanelle.

Rep. Tim Griffin, a Little Rock Republican, said Obama was “doing his darndest to scare the American people simply for political gain.”

The automatic cuts -known in budget parlance as sequestration - were agreed to in August 2011 when Congress passed, and Obama signed, the Budget Control Act. The act stipulated that if a group of congressional leaders, called the supercommittee, couldn’t agree to come up with a deficit reduction plan, then automatic cuts, split evenly between defense and nondefense programs, would kick in.

The committee failed to reach an agreement and, after Obama and Congress deadlocked shortly before their first self-imposed deadline in January, lawmakers voted for a three-month extension. If no deal in Congress is reached, sequestration is set to begin on Friday - the first day of March.

The cuts were designed to hit both the military and social programs. The goal was to make the cuts noxious to as many on Capitol Hill as possible, giving Democrats and Republicans an incentive to avoid the spending reductions and negotiate a deal.

White House officials released state-by-state reports outlining the effect it said the \$85 billion in cuts would have on the nation during the rest of the fiscal year, which ends Sep. 30. The budget data came from the White House’s budget office and from federal agencies, according to the Associated Press.

When similar cuts were threatened last fall, a spokesman for Gov. Mike Beebe warned that Arkansas wouldn’t be able to replace the lost federal dollars with state revenue.

Sequestration will lead to furloughs - a mandatory cut in hours and pay - for about 4,000 U.S. Department of Defense civilian employees in the state. Those civilians are employed at the Pine Bluff Arsenal, U.S. Corps of Engineers, Fort Chaffee, Camp Robinson, Camp Pike, the Arkansas National Guard, the National Guard Professional Education Center and Army Reserve units in the state.

The furlough policy is projected to reduce employees’ gross pay by about \$19.2 million.

There are several types of Defense Department civilian employees, said Maj. Chris Heathscott, with about 1,000 employed by the Arkansas National Guard. Many of those are dual-status jobs - such as the administrative officers and training noncommissioned officers that run the armories and prepare training plans for drill weekends - which are Defense Department civilian jobs that require active military status. All of the Army

Reserve armories in the state have those positions as well. The furlough policy says no full-time military jobs are to be affected, but it is not clear if those dual-status jobs will be exempt.

In addition to the civilian furloughs, the base operation funding for Army facilities such as Camp Robinson, Pine Bluff Arsenal, Fort Chaffee, Camp Pike and all National Guard and Reserve armories will be cut by about \$1.6 million. Details of where those cuts are not yet known.

“Absolutely it will have negative affects on readiness,” Heathscott said.

In addition to the Army cuts in operating funds across the state, Little Rock Air Force Base will have to cut \$2 million out of its base operations budget under sequestration.

Lt. Mallory Glass, spokesman for the base, said the cuts will be made by deferring repairs to two conversion hangars used for electronic and mechanical work on C-130 cargo planes and a training facility.

The furlough policy also will affect the more than 600 Defense Department civilian employees at the base, but will not affect the contractor force, which makes up the bulk of the civilian work force there.

Dan Rahn, the chancellor of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, said the school stands to lose between \$8 million and \$10 million because of sequestration, largely from reductions in National Institutes of Health research grants and reductions in Medicare payments to doctors and hospitals.

In addition to the threat of sequestration, Rahn said the ongoing debate in the Arkansas General Assembly on the possible expansion of Medicaid, the health-care program for children and the poor, made it difficult to plan a budget.

A final decision has not been made, but he said it is possible the 10,000 faculty members and staff members will not receive pay raises this year, and furloughs or layoffs have not been ruled out.

The White House document outlines other cuts that will hit Arkansas. According to the document, 1,140 fewer children in the state will receive medical vaccinations, the state will lose \$660,000 in grants to treat substance abuse and 200 fewer victims of domestic violence will be able to be served through the STOP Violence Against Women Program.

In addition, the report detailed cuts to be made nationally, such as reductions in food inspections and a furloughs of air traffic control workers at the Federal Aviation Administration.

Cotton called the report “far-fetched and designed to paint the scariest picture possible,” and said that other cuts could be made at the Department of Transportation and the Food and Drug Administration that would keep food inspectors and air traffic control personnel on the job.

Cuts in education will jeopardize gains the state has made in recent years said Donna Morey, president of the Arkansas Education Association, the state teachers’ union.

The state stands to lose about \$5.9 million for primary and secondary schools and see about \$5.6 million in cuts in programs for students with disabilities. In total, the education cuts would put 150 teacher and teacher assistant jobs at risk, the administration said.

If you cut programs that help children succeed, there will be long term effects,” Morey said.

1 injured, 1 charged in school-bus wreck (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — A child was taken to a hospital Monday after a man crashed a car into a school bus and then fled into some woods before being arrested, police said.

The Yellville-Summit bus was stopped on Arkansas 14 in the Lakeway community in Marion County at 7:25 a.m. when it was struck from the rear by an eastbound 2004 Chevrolet Malibu, according to an Arkansas State Police news release.

The Malibu's driver, Roman Hayes, 26, of Pyatt, was taken into custody a short time later, according to the release. He was arrested on charges of fleeing, driving with a suspended license and careless driving. He also had an unrelated warrant from Boone County, according to the release.

Twelve students, ages 5-16, were on the bus. One child, whose age and name were not listed, was taken by a private vehicle to a hospital, according to the release. Information about the child's condition wasn't available.

None of the other children were injured, according to the release.