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# California's Budget Cuts: Where They Hurt The Most

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Higher tuition, [fewer firefighters](#), shuttered state parks: the \$14.6 billion in spending cuts in late June's "[austerity budget](#)" may be incomprehensibly large, but Californians are already feeling their real-world effects.

The cuts range from large (\$567.2 million less for CalWORKs, the state's welfare program, which may affect more than 325,000 children) -- to small (\$200,000 less for the Commission on the Status of Women).

And they could get even deeper, since the budget deal between Gov. Jerry Brown and Democrats in the legislature included budget "triggers" that are set to go off if California's tax revenues don't rise enough to meet optimistic forecasts. This seems increasingly likely given [the unexpectedly grim GDP growth numbers](#) released by the federal government on Friday.

California's economy is so large, said Jean Ross, the executive director of the nonprofit California Budget Project, that the state's budget planners cannot consider it in isolation from the rest of the country or the rest of the world.

"You look at what is going on in Europe, you look at uncertainty in markets over federal issues," Ross said.

Whether the cuts go deeper, then, may depend on whether the global economy rises or falls. The consequences of the recently-announced federal debt deal could also cut into the roughly \$80 billion a year the state receives from the feds, although [it is not yet clear by how much](#).

Here are some of the biggest cuts, and the ramifications we already know exist from those cuts. Keep in mind that California uses "baseline budgeting," which assumes that the budget will grow to keep pace with a rising population and high costs -- so these cuts are based off that projected "baseline."

## K-12 EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Proposition 98, passed by voters in 1988, is supposed to mandate how much of the state budget is spent on K-12 education and community colleges. But state legislators got around that by diverting money from state sales taxes to counties as part of the larger realignment of public safety services. Effectively cut: about \$2.1 billion. Billions more due to schools will be deferred to next year's budget.

## HIGHER EDUCATION

The University of California and California State University will collectively lose \$1.375 billion. That means [tuitions will go up by an extra \\$1,068 at UC and an extra 12 percent at CSU](#).

If you aren't a rich kid, it'll be even harder to pay for those higher tuitions, since the state's Cal Grant program also lost \$153 million. Even straight-A students will be forced, in some cases, [to attend cheaper community colleges](#). Tuition at those community colleges, which will lose \$419 million, will also be higher.

## HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

In addition to the aforementioned welfare cuts, millions more people will be affected. The 7.5 million Californians on Medi-Cal, [the "vast majority" of them living below the poverty level](#), will be able to visit doctors a maximum of seven times a year -- and they'll be charged higher co-pays for the privilege. And, as Steve Lopez [documented in the \*Los Angeles Times\*](#), 35,000 elderly now won't be able to visit Adult Day Health Care centers.

California's mental health system, [which already serves hundreds of thousands less people than it did in 2007](#), took a big blow -- despite Proposition 63, which created a millionaires' tax of 1 percent dedicated to funding such services.

California's In-Home Supportive Services program, [which pays caregivers, including families, to tend to elderly or disabled individuals rather than shipping them off to nursing homes](#), lost \$178.4 million.

## OTHER CUTS, REALIGNMENT SAVINGS

Everything's going out the window. The logic of cutting is such that no program, no matter how small, can evade the budget bull's eye.

And the little things add up, said Ross. "I think there is a sense that you want to spread pain over all areas of the budget. I think there certainly is or was a sense ... that you want to touch on programs that a wide spectrum of Californians have an interest in potentially."

That is why [70 state parks will be closing this year](#). Those closures only save \$11 million, but they are highly visible for Californians who might otherwise not rely on the state for very much.

A much bigger item on the budget hit list: the courts, which will lose \$743.6 million. In San Francisco alone, 200 employees will be laid off and 25 courtrooms will be closed. [It could take up to 18 months to finalize a divorce](#).

Many state services will also be "realigned" to the cities and counties, which will see some money sent directly to them but will also be forced to provide more services. One example is the state correctional system, which is supposed to save \$1 billion by sending prisoners to county jails. Among the direct cuts of \$366 million, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation will be getting a whole lot less rehabilitative; \$100 million in funds meant for that purpose will be lost.