
GOP's bill to cut budget would hit WNY hard

Funding for state, city, UB imperiled by House push

By Jerry Zremski

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WASHINGTON — New York State would have to give back its high-speed rail funding.

The City of Buffalo and the University at Buffalo would lose millions.

Research programs at the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus would take a big hit, and the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative would be cut by more than half.

And it would happen all at once under a massive budget-cutting bill that neared passage in the Republican-controlled House on Thursday.

The wide-ranging bill would shrink everything from the Head Start program for local youngsters to the West Valley Demonstration Project. Federal funding for family planning clinics and public broadcasting would be eliminated entirely.

Those proposals are included in a bill aimed at funding federal programs through Sept. 30, and they are separate from the debate over the fiscal 2012 budget that President Obama proposed Monday.

The funding bill is the new House Republican majority's first stab at controlling a federal budget that has run up trillion-dollar-plus deficits in the last several years.

"When we say we're going to cut spending, read my lips: We're going to cut spending," House Speaker John A. Boehner, R-Ohio, told reporters Thursday.

The spending bill, expected to pass by the end of this week, could lead to a showdown with the Democratic Senate and the Obama administration, which oppose the House Republicans' hard line on spending.

If Congress and the president cannot agree on a way to fund the federal government for the rest of fiscal 2011 by the time a temporary spending measure expires March 4, a government shutdown could result.

Thursday, Boehner sounded perfectly willing to let that happen.

"I am not going to move any kind of short-term [funding resolution] at current levels," Boehner said.

Aiming to cut about \$61 billion in federal spending without touching defense, Social Security or Medicare, Republicans offered deep cuts in just about everything else and tweaked their cuts through a series of amendments during marathon legislating sessions in recent days.

Republicans described the bill as tough but necessary medicine.

"All areas must be brought under scrutiny as we face one of the most dire fiscal situations in our nation's history," said Rep. Tom Reed, a Corning Republican who successfully pushed amendments to defund a trust fund for Presidio National Park and a sewer project in Tijuana, Mexico.

"Whether it is \$1 or \$1 billion, we must take a hard look at all government spending to see what can be eliminated," Reed said.

Western New York's Democratic lawmakers said, though, that the cuts the GOP is pushing would undermine economic growth not only now, but for years to come.

Among the investments that would be repealed entirely would be Obama's signature high-speed rail initiative, which Rep. Louise M. Slaughter, D-Fairport, has made a top priority.

"This is a critical time in America's history, and if we are to compete with nations like China, to create jobs in the United States and win the global marketplace, we must support our own nation with smart, targeted cuts that will lower the deficit but invest in American jobs," said Slaughter, who sees high-speed rail as a big job producer for New York.

The spending-reduction bill would hurt the Buffalo area in numerous other ways, too, said Rep. Brian Higgins, D-Buffalo.

"It's proposing to make \$61 billion in cuts that disproportionately hurt Buffalo and Western New York and other older, historic communities that are trying to redefine themselves" through investments in the health sciences and technology, he said.

Higgins said he was especially concerned about proposed cuts in federal research funding that are exactly the opposite of what Obama is proposing in his 2012 budget.

Those research cuts could gravely harm the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus, Higgins said.

Roswell Park Cancer Institute stands to lose about 10 percent of its federal funding under the bill, said Candace S. Johnson, deputy director. The cancer center had received \$59 million in active federal funding as of Feb. 1.

Meanwhile, UB expects to lose between \$17 million and \$18 million of its federal research funding if the cuts go through, said Alexander N. Cartwright, the university's vice president for research.

Beyond cutting investments in the future, the budget bill includes a sharp reduction in community development block grant funding for streets, sidewalks and other projects in Buffalo and other cities, Higgins said.

The city has been expecting to receive about \$17 million in funding under that program this year. Under the GOP bill, however, "let's assume half of that will be lost," Higgins said.

Environmental programs take a big hit, too.

Great Lakes cleanup efforts would be delayed under the huge cut that the Republicans propose, said Jeff Skelding, campaign director of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition.

But the Department of Energy does not yet know exactly what the impact of a \$20 million cut would be at West Valley, the Cattaraugus County nuclear waste site, a department spokesman said.

In Buffalo, though, public broadcasters are pondering the possible impact they would feel through the loss of all their federal aid.

"It could have an impact on jobs," said Michael G. Sutton, executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Western New York Public Broadcasting Association.

During a prolonged debate on the House floor in recent days, Democrats have argued that the American people — though interested in bringing the nation's finances in line — don't want so many programs to be cut so much so fast.

"Unlike some within the Republican Party, the American people are not looking to completely cripple the federal government and leave the nation to the corporate elite," Slaughter said.

Republicans said, however, that last November's election that brought them to power was a referendum on big government.

"To reduce uncertainty and create a better environment for job creation, we need to cut wasteful spending," Boehner told reporters.

This means that everyone will have to sacrifice, Reed told reporters on a conference call earlier this week. "Nothing has been left untouched," he said. "Everyone is taking a haircut."

Programs that are important to Reed's Southern Tier district will be cut, too, the congressman acknowledged.

"There will be some short-term pain that will cause long-term prosperity," he said.

Rep. Harold D. "Hal" Rogers, R-Ky., chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said the bill "reverses a trend of out-of-control Democrat spending over the last two years that has increased overall discretionary funding by 24 percent."

"Never before has Congress undertaken a task of this magnitude, but never before have we been faced with a deficit crisis of this scale," Rogers added.

Rogers contended that the cuts were "responsible" and "judicious."

But UB's Cartwright said the budget reductions would hit Buffalo especially hard.

"This area," he said, "is in need of every bit of resources it can get."

jzremski@buffnews.com

Comments

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BILLIONS. And. BILLIONS. WOW

PHIL RYAN, WEST SENECA, NY on Tue Feb 22, 2011 at 03:33 PM

[REPLY](#) [FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE](#)

That high speed rail plan is the number one DUMBEST idea I think I've ever heard. I actually thought it was a joke at first. WHO takes trains? Not very many people, that's why Amtrak loses over \$1billion per year. So, they want to make more TRAINS? Do they have ZERO common sense? Taking Obama's advise for ANYTHING is just plain dumb because he has absolutely NO track record and absolutely NO experience in anything with the exception of Baskin Robbins and community

agitation. This is ALL about creating UNION railroad jobs that will cost BILLIONS upon BILLIONS of dollars. UGH, 2012, hurry up before it's too late!!!!

DAWN KESSLER, BUFFALO, NY on Tue Feb 22, 2011 at 01:26 PM

REPLY FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

"Western New York's Democratic lawmakers said, though, that the cuts the GOP is pushing would undermine economic growth not only now, but for years to come...." Give me a break please. We have to bribe businesses to relocate here because ... "

Where are you getting your \$155 per month for a single person on welfare? Yes, they do have to work, they have to work 40 hrs per week where ever welfare sends them for the \$155 per month, so do you REALLY think someone will do that, or will they get off of their behind and go work at McDonalds or somewhere like that where they would make MORE than \$155 per month? That way they can still collect all of the goodies AND qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. If they have a couple of kids, the daycare is PAID by us, the taxpayer, and that individual will get back just under \$10,000 as a tax "refund" even though they didn't pay any tax at all!!!! If they are drug addicted, they are exempt from work. Did you know that? Did you know that a single person, within the income guidelines, gets \$200 per month in foodstamps (throw in a couple of kids and foodstamps will go up to over \$800 per month), utility vouchers (so they never have to pay a utility bill), housing assistance (practically free) such as Section 8, Belmont, BMHA, etc, FREE medical care and FREE prescriptions, FREE taxi rides to doctors appointments, eligibility to be able to go to food pantries, furniture allowances, and I could go on and on, but DO YOU GET IT? NYS has THE most generous welfare package in the country. How do I know this? Because I have lived all over the country, have acquaintances all over the country and I PERSONALLY KNOW a ridiculous number of welfare recipients. You, Jeremy Lewis, don't have a clue as to what you are talking about.

DAWN KESSLER, BUFFALO, NY on Tue Feb 22, 2011 at 01:12 PM

REPLY FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

The article title reads: GOP's bill to cut budget would hit WNY hard.... Actually it should read " Liberal Democrat politices of the past 50 years hit NY hard" . Spending nearly half of your state budget on socialism would hit any state hard! As long as we let anybody move to NY and immediate start collecting free money we will never dig out of this democrat led recession.

BRUCE ANDREWS, YOUNGSTOWN, NY on Mon Feb 21, 2011 at 02:05 PM

REPLY FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

"To have after-tax take-home pay of \$32,571 from a regular job, a welfare recipient would have to earn a salary of \$44,900 annually, according to CHANGE-NY. By comparison, the starting salary for nuclear engineers with college degrees is \$32,200. The ... "

Where did I get my information from? I got it from right here. Where did you get your information from??<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/06/nyregion/06welfare.html>Published: July 5, 2009
 "The last time welfare recipients in New York saw an increase in their basic cash allowance, Derek Jeter was in high school, a subway token cost \$1.15 and David N. Dinkins had just been sworn in as mayor. Nineteen years later, they will see another long-awaited increase beginning this month, bringing a subsidy for a typical family of three to \$321 a month, from \$291, city and state officials said. "You can ALSO look here... The New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Services. It is all in there... (Because even if the NY Times said that there is a 100% chance of the sun being up at noon in Miami FL, you probably wouldn't believe it, would you?)
<http://otda.ny.gov/main/legal/>You can also find more information here, about who makes up the welfare rolls in NY. <http://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/welfare/1999/6-99.htm>I don't know where you came up with that starting salary for a nuclear engineer either, because I knew a Nuke that left the USN and went to work for Niagara Mohawk and he started at well over \$85,000.00 a year. Here is what the average salary is for a nuclear engineer. Salary \$61,171 - \$98,716 Total Salary \$62,705 - \$103,123 http://www.payscale.com/research/US/Job=Nuclear_Engineer/SalaryYou may want to look up articles on the Welfare Reform Act, signed by Gov. George Pataki. Lot's of eye openers in there.

JEREMY LEWIS, BUFFALO, NY on Mon Feb 21, 2011 at 09:55 AM

REPLY FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

To have after-tax take-home pay of \$32,571 from a regular job, a welfare recipient would have to earn a salary of \$44,900 annually, according to CHANGE-NY. By comparison, the starting salary for nuclear engineers with college degrees is \$32,200. The \$44,900 figure also is higher than the statewide median household income, almost four times the poverty level, and almost three times the annual unemployment-insurance benefits. The CHANGE-NY study also noted that sending the welfare recipient to Harvard University would be cheaper than the current approach. The cost of tuition, family housing, meals, and campus health services at Harvard is \$31,692 per year-- less than what New York shells out annually for a welfare recipient. Carroll explained that while not everyone makes this much on welfare, many do. The example provided -- a woman with two children -- is the typical recipient, contrary to the common stereotype of a single able-bodied male on welfare. I don't know where you got your 155.00 per month information from. Probably the huffinton post LOL

BRUCE ANDREWS, YOUNGSTOWN, NY on Sun Feb 20, 2011 at 08:46 AM

REPLY FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

Gov. Walker did propose \$117 million in tax breaks for business. As business has been fleeing New York for quite some time (for low-tax, low-welfare states such as Texas and Florida), we might be well advised to create some incentives for businesses (read: employers) to remain in NY. The statement that there was a \$117 million surplus before the "republican" governor came in power is easily disproven (do a quick Google search on Rachel Maddow's empty-headed rant on this topic). When businesses thrive, they hire people. When taxes are too high, the high earners (and many businesses) flee the state. Our kids go south or west to find work. The number one export from

Western New York is brains. For the Democrat party who consistently throw their political support behind the unions and hosing the taxpayers, the economic chickens are coming home to roost.

DAVID BOWMAN, AMHERST, NY on Sun Feb 20, 2011 at 08:08 AM

REPLY FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

"Western New York's Democratic lawmakers said, though, that the cuts the GOP is pushing would undermine economic growth not only now, but for years to come...." Give me a break please. We have to bribe businesses to relocate here because ... "

You may want to read up on the new welfare laws that NY passed in 1996. Our "Generous" welfare system pays a single person \$155.00 a month, and you have to be working to collect that. You should really read up on it. Up until Wisconsin got a new governor they were looking at a 124 million dollar surplus for the fiscal year. Within days the new governor had spent 140 million dollars on tax breaks for corporations. Are you really that naive to think that this is all about a deficit? Especially one that Walker created? We could cover every person in the country with the money we have given to corporations in the past decade, and each year we saw a net loss of jobs too boot. We can't find jobs for the workers we already have. Try looking in the classified for Employment, it usually is not even a full page.

JEREMY LEWIS, BUFFALO, NY on Sat Feb 19, 2011 at 05:19 PM

REPLY FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

All I know is that government cannot continue to have exorbitant increases in spending way above the CPI or inflation. It is simply not sustainable. The federal deficit/debt is such that soon China will be telling us what to do. Get real, there is too much federal welfare, for everybody and it has to stop. And a perfect example is in Wisconsin where the public employees contribute very little to their healthcare and nothing to their retirement. It is left to the taxpayers. How sustainable is that? The madness has to end.

LAWRENCE WILCOX, FREDONIA, NY on Sat Feb 19, 2011 at 11:13 AM

REPLY FLAG AS INAPPROPRIATE

"Western New York's Democratic lawmakers said, though, that the cuts the GOP is pushing would undermine economic growth not only now, but for years to come...." Give me a break please. We have to bribe businesses to relocate here because of our generous social welfare programs but nobody talks about this thousand pound guerilla in the room. If you want to save money cut welfare for adult males ages 18 to 55. Get off your lazy tail and get a job. We can't find workers because we are paying them generously to stay at home with "free health care" WAKE UP DEMOCRATS stop voting like sheep. Your policies have destroyed New York, California etc. Don't you think that maybe, just

maybe it could be YOUR fault and not the GOP Im against welfare for businesses too but I also dont think we should be providing it for thousands of lazy people as well.

BRUCE ANDREWS, YOUNGSTOWN, NY on Sat Feb 19, 2011 at 09:33 AM

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