

# Minnesota: Sequester cuts hit education and state's most vulnerable

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Minnesota faces approximately \$85 million in cuts from the sequestration order signed by President Obama, affecting education, public health, childcare, and environmental protection. The biggest impact will be felt in education and by some of the state's most vulnerable citizens.

Primary and secondary education lost \$7 million, which will result in an estimated 100 lost jobs, 8,000 fewer students served, and 40 fewer schools receiving funding. An additional \$9.2 million to help educate children with disabilities is gone, with an expected 110 jobs lost. The University of Minnesota lost \$30 million in research grants. Head Start and Early Head Start services will be eliminated for about 700 children.

The education cuts are devastating for the state's Native American communities. Because Indian reservations are on federal land, tribes rely to a far greater extent on federal funding for education. Currently, only 45 percent of Native American students in Minnesota receive a high school diploma in four years, compared to the state average of 87 percent.

The White Earth Reservation may close schools early, and one of its schools planned to place a moratorium on field trips and combine grades six through eight into a single classroom. The Red Lake School District has reduced class offerings and staff, and the Mahnomen Public School may cut all extra-curricular and after-school programs.

The Head Start cuts will have a disproportionate impact on tribes as well. The state estimates that 40 percent of Native American students in Minnesota are unprepared for kindergarten. The Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa expects to see 25 Head Start slots eliminated.

Federal aid comprises about half of Minnesota's health department budget, making the cuts in this area

particularly painful for some of the state's residents. Programs losing funding include ones that provide HIV tests, assistance with substance abuse, vaccines for children, and Meals on Wheels for seniors. The sequester cuts will also reduce Minnesota's ability to respond to public health emergencies.

The health care cuts from the sequestration order may be compounded by cuts being proposed at the state level by the Minnesota legislature. While the state's budget has not been finalized, the House and Senate, both with Democratic majorities, released proposals in March that included \$150 million and \$153 million respectively in reductions to health and human services. Whatever reductions occur will follow years of other funding reductions in the state, including approximately \$1 billion cut in the 2011 legislative session.

Other cuts in Minnesota attributable to the federal sequester include \$2.5 million for Section 8 housing, \$689,000 for job search assistance, \$3 million for environment protection, \$1.6 million for fish and wildlife protection, and cuts to child care for 500 vulnerable or disadvantaged children. In addition, approximately 2,000 Department of Defense furloughs will result in \$12.5 million in lost pay.

It is unclear to what extent Minnesota will attempt to offset the cuts through the state budget process, if at all. A recent survey by the National Conference of State Legislatures showed that only five states and the District of Columbia are taking steps in their budgets to make up for the sequestration cuts. To this point, while areas such as education appear likely to see an increase in spending at the state level, no Minnesota politician is talking publicly about addressing the cutbacks. Moreover, state education spending will do little to help the most deeply affected schools on tribal land.

The sequestration cuts are the result of the policies of

the two parties of big business, the Democrats and the Republicans, who claim that there is no money for social spending as the stock market continues to rise and big business hoards trillions of dollars that it refuses to spend. In Minnesota, as elsewhere, the callousness of the ruling class is producing ignorance, poverty, premature death, environment degradation, and all manner of social misery.



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