

Looming Budget Cuts To Affect Most Americans

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Downtown St. Louis

WASHINGTON – Need help with weeds or “noxious” plants? How about with “obnoxious aquatic plants?” Worrying at night about wild horses and burros? Any desire to become a “21st Century museum professional?”

Such seemingly arcane targets of taxpayer dollars are among the almost 2,100 forms of federal assistance and grant programs listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance, the Bible of government spending.

It’s a more than 100 percent increase in 40 years.

While many reflect the government’s more esoteric impulses, others address bread-and-

butter needs, like highways, medical care, other infrastructure, housing and education.

Together, they consume almost \$750 billion a year or about 20 percent of federal spending.

They also illustrate many of the political complexities awaiting Congress next year as it takes a serious look at reducing government outlays.

Once drawn, these lines in the budget become hard to erase or shrink, as constituencies, lobbyists and lawmakers – many of whom have pride of authorship – stand guard over them, observers say.

They reflect government's attempt to deal with most every human need, large and small, critics add.

Lawmakers insist on passing them because "they want to issue the press release," said Brian Riedl, budget analyst at the conservative Heritage Foundation.

Such habits spawn duplication and confusion for constituencies supposed to benefit, added fiscal analyst Chris Edwards of the libertarian-conservative Cato Institute.

For instance, there are at least 84 grant programs that have Indian or "Native American" in their title and hundreds more for which they are eligible.

Budget hawks insist controlling the deficit requires reviewing all such expenditures.

Liberals and progressives, on the other hand, say many grant programs help the most vulnerable and should not be touched without first looking at other parts of the deficit problem as well, including defense spending and tax loopholes.

What's not in doubt is that grants show how federal spending permeates everyday life.

"Most people don't have a clue," said Stan Collender, an oft-cited federal budget

consultant who has worked for both the House and Senate budget committees.

From subsidies and inspections that affect their morning milk to the air traffic controllers who keep planes from crashing into homes, federal government spending "quite literally affects everything," Collender said.

Some of the largest, more recognizable grant programs include Medicaid, the health care program for the indigent and disabled, \$292.31 billion; highway planning and construction, \$58.78 billion; Title I help for disadvantage public school students, \$7.79 billion; school breakfasts and lunches, \$12.37 billion; community development funds, \$6.71 billion; and housing assistance to the poor, \$16.35 billion.

Other mega federal programs like Social Security, Medicare and farm subsidies are labeled "direct payments" rather than grants.

Just as with native American programs, the Census Bureau's listing of government assistance varieties often suggests overlapping functions.

Take family planning, for instance. The government has separate programs titled "Family Planning Services" and "Family Planning Personnel Training." And then there is "Family Planning Services Delivery Improvement Research Grants."

Seemingly related are "Abstinence Education" and "Healthy Marriage Promotion and Responsible Fatherhood Grants."

Simple weeds are a another example. There is "Executive Office for Weed and Seed" and just plain "Weed Control."

One of the bureaucrats' favorite phrases appears to be "capacity building," as in enhancing the ability of an organization to address an issue. Kinds offered include:

-"State Capacity Building."

-"State Capacity Building Grants and Cooperative Agreements for States and Tribes."

-“Capacity Building for Underserved Populations.”

-“Nonprofit Capacity Building.”

-“Institutional Capacity Building.”

Other possible examples of overlap::

-Two programs with exact same title “Wildlife Management,” but not to be confused with a third called “Wildlife Studies.” Still others are called “State Wildlife Grants” and “Partners for Fish and Wildlife.”

-Conservation efforts for animals abroad including “African Elephant Conservation,” which is different than “Asian Elephant Conservation.” And then there is “Rhinoceros and Tiger Conservation.” Not to be left out are “Wildlife Without Borders – Africa Program,” “Wildlife Without Borders – Latin America and the Caribbean” and “Wildlife Without Borders – Mexico.”

-“Unsolicited Grant Program” and “Solicited Grant Program.”

-Representing both sides of the energy debate with “Renewable Energy Research and Development” and “Fossil Energy Research and Development.”

-Motor vehicle safety with “Safety Belt Performance Grants” and “Occupant Protection Incentive Grants.” The first aims to “increase safety belt use by encouraging states to enact and enforce primary safety belt laws.” The latter aims to “encourage states to adopt effective programs to reduce highway deaths and injuries resulting from individuals riding unrestrained or improperly restrained in motor vehicles.”

As irritating as apparent redundancies might be to taxpayer watchdogs, real deficit reduction will require much more than going after the proverbial waste, fraud and abuse, budget experts say.

Of the almost \$3.7 million in annual outlays, slices of the pie equal:

- Social Security, Medicare and other retirement programs: 37 percent.
- Social programs: 20 percent.
- National defense, veterans and foreign affairs: 24 percent.
- Physical, human and community development: 9 percent.
- Law enforcement and general government: 2 percent.
- Net interest on the debt: 8 percent.

While voters often advocate cutting federal spending, they don't realize how their favorite program may be part of the problem. "There is a real disconnect there," said James Honey, fiscal expert at the liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Added Karlyn Bowman, who monitors public opinion for the American Enterprise Institute:

"With the exception of foreign aid, people don't seem to want to cut much. Yet they are also saying that government has gotten too big, that spending needs to be reduced, and for the first time in a long time, the deficit is something people are paying attention to. As frequently happens, the public is of two minds on an issue."

Another difficulty in cutting spending is that government programs are more important to Americans than ever before. A Census Bureau study earlier this year found that nearly half of American households depend on a government check of some sort.

Moreover, the percentage of the federal budget that goes toward "payments for individuals" has increased from 17 percent in 1940 to 60 percent today, according to Office of Management and Budget tables.

It's a statistic some lament.

"We've gone from the national security state to the entitlement state," said Riedl, the Heritage analyst.

2009 Direct Federal Spending for Selected States

(Source U.S. Census Bureau's Consolidated Federal Funds Report)

California

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$81.79 billion

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$75.48 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$5.331 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, economic and community development, social services, education, research) - \$90.91 billion.

Government contracts - \$68.97 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$23.46 billion.

Total - \$345.97 billion.

Wyoming

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$1.57 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$859.15 million.

Other direct payments (farm, housing assistance, flood insurance, et. al.) - \$305.53 million.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$2.60 billion

Government contracts - \$259.81 million.

Salaries and wages - \$669.23 million.

Total - \$6.27 billion.

Utah

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$5.79 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$3.02 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$456.00 million

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$4.94 billion.

Government contracts - \$3.63 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$2.84 billion.

Total - \$20.70 billion.

Colorado

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$12.34 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$7.16 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$1.47 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$8.85 billion.

Government contracts - \$11.12 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$6.84 billion.

Total - \$47.80 billion.

New Mexico

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$6.45 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$3.33 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$475.20 million.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$6.95 billion.

Government contracts - \$7.73 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$2.52 billion.

Total - \$27.47 billion.

Nebraska

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$5.19 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$3.14 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$1.77 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$3.65 billion.

Government contracts - \$1.16 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$1.59 billion.

Total - \$16.52 billion.

Oklahoma

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$12.23 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$7.57 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$1.29 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$8.54 billion.

Government contracts - \$3.14 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$4.70 billion.

Total - \$37.51 billion.

Texas

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$58.30 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$42.38 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$7.06 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$55.67 billion.

Government contracts - \$39.31 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$24.37 billion.

Total - \$227.10 billion.

Iowa

Retirement, disability (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$8.90 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$6.32 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$2.57 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education,

research) - \$7.57 billion.

Government contracts - \$2.32 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$1.66 billion.

Total - \$29.36 billion.

Missouri

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$18.47 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$13.44 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$2.77 billion

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social social education) - \$13.56 billion.

Government contracts - \$13.50 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$6.17 billion.

Total - \$67.94 billion.

Mississippi

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$9.46 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$6.79 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$656.22 million.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$8.30 billion

Government contracts - \$4.98 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$2.63 billion.

Total - \$32.84 billion.

Ohio

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$33.68 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$30.75 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$2.37 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$25.41 billion.

Government contracts - \$9.10 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$6.36 billion.

Total - \$107.97 billion.

Kentucky

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$14.32 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$9.60 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$1.05 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$11.36 billion.

Government contracts - \$6.97 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$6.69 billion.

Total - \$50.01 billion.

Tennessee

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$20.38 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$15.95 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$1.15 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$17.06 billion.

Government contracts - \$10.42 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$3.56 billion.

Total - \$68.54 billion.

Connecticut

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$9.76 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$8.71 billion

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$509.88 million.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$8.82 billion.

Government contracts - \$13.00 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$1.76 billion.

Total - \$42.58 billion.

Pennsylvania

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$41.89 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$36.78 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$3.22 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$27.36 billion.

Government contracts - \$18.09 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$8.32 billion.

Total - \$136.68 billion.

West Virginia

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$7.51 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$4.56 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$107.7 million.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, education) - \$4.92 billion.

Government contracts - \$822.45 million.

Salaries and wages - \$1.86 billion.

Total - \$19.80 billion.

District of Columbia

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$2.84 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$3.71 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$1.26 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$12.02 billion.

Government contracts - \$7.75 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$22.29 billion.

Total - \$49.88 billion.

Maryland

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$18.44 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$10.83 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$3.49 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$11.80 billion.

Government contracts - \$34.33 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$13.23 billion.

Total - \$92.15 billion.

Virginia

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$27.31 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$13.33 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$2.17 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$12.67 billion.

Government contracts - \$81.79 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$18.25 billion.

Total - \$155.55 billion.

North Carolina

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$28.59 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$17.07 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$1.39 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, education) - \$20.94 billion.

Government contracts - \$5.20 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$11.64 billion.

Total - \$84.83 billion.

Florida

Retirement, disability payments (includes Social Security, retirement and disability for federal workers and military) - \$62.29 billion.

Other direct payments to individuals (includes Medicare) - \$48.06 billion.

Other direct payments (includes farm payments, housing assistance, flood insurance) - \$2.59 billion.

Grants (includes highways, Medicaid, community development, social services, education, research) - \$31.97 billion.

Government contracts - \$18.53 billion.

Salaries and wages - \$12.21 billion.

Total - \$175.68 billion