

**By SAM HATCHER
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Local officials are scrambling to understand exactly what impact federal sequestration will have here in respect to the operation of city and county governments.

If Congress does not reach an agreement by Friday on the sequestration issues, a series of automatic cuts in federal spending will begin without further notice and many of these cuts it is believed will jeopardize a number of jobs locally.

Almost all sectors of government, from the federal all the way down to the local level, are indicating that they are embracing for the proposed cuts.

A White House press release earlier this week shows the impact in Tennessee will be realized in public education, health care, the environment, military readiness and other areas.

Wilson County Mayor Randall Hutto believes that federal dollars for education are where we will be hit the hardest.

Wilson County Director of Schools Mike Davis said that he is not sure that anyone has a “true answer” as to how the county school system will be affected, but that they are preparing for a worst case scenario if Congress does not act.

“It will not impact the remainder of this school year, but will impact funding as of July 1 for the next fiscal year. The state department is saying that special education and CTE (career technical education) should experience a 5.1 percent cut for that following year,” Davis explained, adding that he is remaining hopeful that a compromise will be reached.

“They suggest that you have a backup plan in the worst case scenario. Hopefully they will resolve this or come to a compromise with a 2.5 percent cut. We have not received anything official, just making plans on the best estimates we have,” he continued. “I am hopeful that we will not have a drastic impact if it happens. Right now nothing official has come down.”

Lebanon Special School District Director Scott Benson could not be reached for comment prior to The Wilson Post’s deadline.

Hutto said that he “really and truly” does not think sequestration will have an impact on the county’s roads.

“They are on gasoline tax, not federal dollars. We really don’t get any federal money,” he said. “If these cuts cause us to go back into a recession, our sales tax dollars could be affected, too. People will not be spending as much. We are trying to stay in tune with that is going on.”

County Finance Director Aaron Maynard added that he is not aware of any effect it will have on the county at the present time during remarks at the Wilson County Commission meeting Monday night.

Other state agencies are saying that they expect to endure the loss of major funding in a number of areas.

For instance, last week the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency said it could lose nearly \$3 million in federal funding meant for firefighters and first responders across the state.

Wilson Emergency Management Agency Director John Jewell said locally these losses will mostly affect grants.

“We are pretty far down the chain, so my guess is that it would affect us in the area of grants – not grants that have already been given to us but in future grant funding – the grants that we

could apply for,” Jewell said, noting that in recent years grant funding has been considerably down anyway.

According to a report from the state’s health care industry, the top five areas in health care that will likely suffer the most job losses in 2013, because of sequestration, are hospitals (physicians’ offices, dentists and other health practitioners); nursing and residential care facilities; medical and diagnostic labs, and outpatient and other ambulatory care services; and home healthcare services.

“To put these reductions in perspective, the total economic impact in the first year will be equivalent to losing a factory of more than 250 jobs in every one of Tennessee’s 95 counties,” Tennessee Hospital Association President Craig Becker said months ago.

According to the White House, Tennessee can expect the following to be affected if Congress cannot avoid sequestration:

- Teachers and Schools: Tennessee will lose approximately \$14.8 million in funding for primary and secondary education, putting around 200 teacher and aide jobs at risk. In addition about 32,000 fewer students would be served and approximately 60 fewer schools would receive funding.
- Education for Children with Disabilities: In addition, Tennessee will lose approximately \$11.7 million in funds for about 140 teachers, aides, and staff who help children with disabilities.
- Work-Study Jobs: Around 1,660 fewer low income students in Tennessee would receive aid to help them finance the costs of college and around 720 fewer students will get work-study jobs that help them pay for college.
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- Head Start: Head Start and Early Head Start services would be eliminated for approximately 1,200 children in Tennessee, reducing access to critical early education.
- Protections for Clean Air and Clean Water: Tennessee would lose about \$2,211,000 in

environmental funding to ensure clean water and air quality, as well as prevent pollution from pesticides and hazardous waste. In addition, Tennessee could lose another \$1,216,000 in grants for fish and wildlife protection.

- **Military Readiness:** In Tennessee, approximately 7,000 civilian Department of Defense employees would be furloughed, reducing gross pay by around \$36.9 million in total.
- **Army: Base operation funding** would be cut by about \$1.9 million in Tennessee.
- **Law Enforcement and Public Safety Funds for Crime Prevention and Prosecution:** Tennessee will lose about \$367,000 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.
- **Job Search Assistance to Help those in Tennessee find Employment and Training:** Tennessee will lose about \$681,000 in funding for job search assistance, referral, and placement, meaning around 24,050 fewer people will get the help and skills they need to find employment.
- **Child Care:** Up to 800 disadvantaged and vulnerable children could lose access to child care, which is also essential for working parents to hold down a job.
- **Vaccines for Children:** In Tennessee around 2,590 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 \$177,000.
- **Public Health:** Tennessee will lose approximately \$606,000 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. In addition, Tennessee will lose about \$1,480,000 in grants to help prevent and treat substance abuse, resulting in around 700 fewer admissions to substance abuse programs. And the Tennessee State Department of Health will lose about \$252,000 resulting in around 6,300 fewer HIV tests.
- **STOP Violence Against Women Program:** Tennessee could lose up to \$136,000 in funds that provide services to victims of domestic violence, resulting in up to 500 fewer victims being served.
- **Nutrition Assistance for Seniors:** Tennessee would lose approximately \$1,031,000 in funds that provide meals for seniors.

The cuts, it has been reported, would not be made at once. Rather, they would be phased in over several months.