

[Home](#) - [Site Index](#) - [Site Search/Archive](#) - [Help](#)Welcome, [ctzcrank](#) - [Member Center](#) - [Log Out](#)

Search:

Get home delivery at **50% off!**
 The New York Times [click here](#)

[NYTimes.com](#) > [National](#)

States, Facing Budget Shortfalls, Cut the Major and the Mundane

By TIMOTHY EGAN

LINCOLN, Neb., April 18 — At a time when the governor of Missouri has ordered every third light bulb unscrewed to save money, when teachers are doubling as janitors in Oklahoma and working two weeks without pay in Oregon, when Connecticut is laying off prosecutors and Kentucky is releasing prison inmates early, the veterinarian crisis in Nebraska may seem like small potatoes.

Nebraska has dismissed two of its three state diagnostic veterinarians, meaning a rancher with a sick cow in Scottsbluff now has to drive the length of the state to see what's up with Nellie.

That cutback, the state equivalent of rooting for coins in a car ashtray, is a prime example of how far the pain of anemic state treasuries has spread — and not only in Nebraska, a state where almost 25,000 poor mothers have lost health care and where state college tuition has been raised 20 percent over two years.

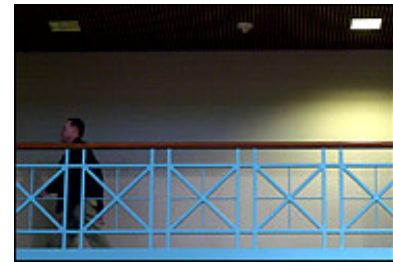
Ranchers here have joined a chorus of wounded constituents pleading with state politicians to restore spending. From Lincoln to Honolulu, the reply has been the same: the till is empty.

The states are desperate, struggling with their worst financial crises since World War II. They have tapped rainy day funds, raided tobacco money that was supposed to have provided health care for children and taxed every possible vice.

Last year brought the storm warnings: some layoffs, the inconveniences of libraries closing early and roads without fresh asphalt. Now, as states scramble to find ways to cut nearly \$100 billion this year and next from budgets that must by law be balanced, the cuts are much larger, and their effects profound.

It is not just that states are withdrawing health care for the poor and mentally ill. They are also dismissing state troopers, closing parks and schools, dropping bus routes, eliminating college scholarships and slashing a host of other services that have long been taken for granted.

These budget decisions are neither popular nor partisan, the people making them say. Nothing is off the table. Cities and states are stuffing slot machines into gas stations and lending basic services out for commercial bid.



Associated Press

In Missouri, every third light bulb in most government buildings has been unscrewed. The move is one of numerous cost-saving measures being tried by states short of cash.

Advertisement

ARTICLE TOOLS

-  [E-Mail This Article](#)
-  [Printer-Friendly Format](#)
-  [Most E-Mailed Articles](#)
-  [Reprints](#)
-  [Single-Page Format](#)

ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY **STARBUCKS.COM**

MULTIMEDIA

- [Graphic: State Budget Shortfalls](#)

TIMES NEWS TRACKER

Topics	Alerts
States (US)	
Budgets and Budgeting	

[Create Your Own](#) | [Manage Alerts](#)

NYT Store

In Pleasant Ridge, Mich., the police are considering a deal to allow companies to advertise on the sides of patrol cars in exchange for cheap vehicle leases. Police Chief Karl Swieczkowski said his budget-pinched force was ready to go ahead if the advertisements get legal approval.

"State governments are under siege," said Angela Monson, president of the National Conference of State Legislatures. "This is the real deal, and it's only going to get worse."

In Ms. Monson's home state, Oklahoma, teachers have driven buses, mopped the floors and even cooked cafeteria food, as support staffs for major school districts have been sharply reduced or eliminated.

A new library stands empty in Hawaii; the state built it but left no money for books. The bookmobile, the only library access for many in the islands, has already been cut.

Here in Nebraska, a museum of dinosaur bones and natural wonders dismissed its only full-time staff member, costing a swath of the prairie a cultural resource that has been around nearly since the Depression.

In a state that has vowed to try to hold onto its young people, a thousand University of Nebraska students have been told their financial aid is over, and 431 college positions were eliminated.

For Neil Obermeyer, a graduate assistant pursuing a master of fine arts here in Lincoln, the cuts mean he will probably leave school, and may go to California, where a good job prospect awaits, he said.

But for Jonathan Bradley, a disabled father of two, the cuts mean the end of medication that has kept him alive, said his wife, Mary. She works as a paralegal in Omaha, but the job offers no health insurance. The family had been eligible for Medicaid, the state-federal program for the poor and disabled. But to balance its budget, Nebraska raised the eligibility threshold by more than 30 percent.

"We even considered getting a divorce just so one of us would qualify," Ms. Bradley said. "What are we supposed to do, live in a tent?"

Measures that voters approved by wide margins — property tax exemptions for the elderly, teacher salary increases, new parks and open space — have been eliminated or suspended.

Washington State, which has the nation's largest ferry fleet with 25 million passengers a year, has announced plans to drop one of its most popular boats — a foot-passenger-only commuter ferry.

Continued

1 | [2](#) | [3](#) | [4](#) | [Next>>](#)



NYT Pocket
MBA Series
Price: \$110.
[Learn More.](#)

Real Estate

Spotlight on...



[Westchester Homes](#)
Scarsdale, Ardsley,
more...



[Active Adult Homes](#)
Retirement
communities...

• [Search Other Areas](#)

RELATED ARTICLES

- [Shift in Bonds Has States Rethinking Tobacco Plans](#) (April 10, 2003) \$
- [Market Place; Decreasing Prices Ignite a Sell-Off In Tobacco Bonds](#) (April 3, 2003) \$
- [A NATION AT WAR: PAYING FOR THE WAR; Panels Approve War Spending but Reject Free Rein for White House](#) (April 2, 2003) \$
- [Doubts on Tobacco Funds Hurt State Bonds](#) (April 2, 2003) \$
- [Judge Questions Legal Fees In New York Tobacco Case](#) (March 27, 2003) \$

Find more results for [States \(US\)](#) and [Budgets and Budgeting](#) .

TOP NATIONAL ARTICLES

- [States, Facing Budget Shortfalls, Cut the Major and the Mundane](#)
- [The Prisoners: A Celebrated Return to U.S. Soil for Former P.O.W.'s](#)
- [Bill to Bar Suits Against Gun Industry Stuns Crime Victims](#)
- [Murder Suspect Was Carrying \\$10,000 Cash, Police Say](#)
- [Shuttle Program Manager to Quit](#)



Expect the World every morning with Home Delivery of The New York Times Newspaper.

[Click Here for 50% off](#)