

Budget cuts will trigger more slashing for states

**By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice**
WASHINGTON (NNPA) — President George W. Bush's proposed \$2.5 trillion dollar 2006 budget, which slashes badly needed programs for inner cities and the poor, will impose heavy burdens on state and local governments, triggering even more reductions, budget analysts predict.

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Council, not realizing that it was the president and the Congress that the did the cutting."

The Bush budget includes:

- Medicaid cuts by \$45 billion over 10 years
- Food stamp cuts by \$1.1 billion, by terminating 200,000 to 300,000 people from the program
- The freeze of child-care funding for five years, causing the termination of childcare for 300,000 low-income children by 2009
- Cuts by at least \$2.3 billion in the Community De-

velopment Block Grant program

The only alternatives for some states may be to raise taxes or take money from other programs, says Greenstein.

President Bush has argued that defense and homeland security are top priorities and that he has to cut domestic spending in order to reduce the deficit. But some economists note that when Bush took office in 2001, the Congressional Budget Office projected surpluses of \$5.6 trillion from 2002 to 2011. Now, the CBO projects a \$368 billion deficit at the close of 2005.

Often when state and local governments fall short, community programs pitch in to help. But that's becoming harder to do.

"We certainly believe that our programs could be affected and would be affected if there are cuts in the dollars allocated to the Community Development Block Grant Program, the workforce program or a variety of education programs," says Marc Morial, president and CEO of the National Urban League.

"These dollars give us an opportunity to do housing work, job development work, after school programs."

Block grant funding can also be used for clinics, recreation centers, day-care facilities, literacy programs and housing development. After

cutting its budget, Bush wants to fold the CDBG program into the Commerce and Labor departments.

Community Service Block Grants are also on the chopping block.

"The reaction now is something near shock at the budget notion of possibly cutting CSBG," says Derrick Span, national president of the Community Action Partnerships, a coalition of 1,000 organizations around the country that serve poor neighborhoods.

Span says the cuts could cause as many as 200 of his affiliates to shut down. He says, "The real shock is that at a time when poverty rates are rising and even now more middle class people are seeking services, that there would even be consideration of cutting domestic programs like CSBG that help so many people."

The U.S. Census reported that the number of people living in poverty rose from approximately 32.9 million when Bush was inaugurated in 2001 to slightly more than 36 million in 2003.

The poverty rate for African-Americans was 22.7 percent in 2001. It has now risen to 24.1 percent. The poverty line is defined as \$9,573 or less for an individual or \$18,660 for a family of four with two children.

All is not lost yet, says Greenstein. He stresses that pressure on members of the House and Senate, who actu-

ally vote on the budget, may be fruitful.

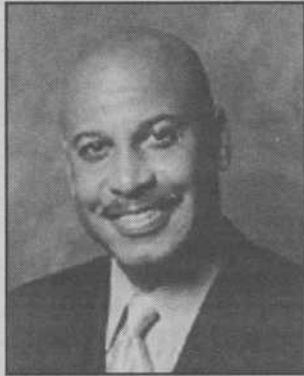
"This hasn't happened yet. People need to organize, whether it's through neighborhood associations or church auxiliaries or whatever is the best way for them to come together and they need to make their views known to their members of

He can deny that.

He also has the veto power if they have favorite programs and he can say, 'If you don't take care of me, when your program comes along, I'm going to veto it.' He's going to be there four more years. So if they want to deliver things to their constituency, they're going to have to bar-

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Security, day care, community and economic development programs — you see a really mean-spiritedness by the Bush administration," says Trenton, N.J., Mayor Doug Palmer, president of the 1,000-member National Conference of Democratic Mayors.

Elimination of the \$642 million Community Service Block Grant program

Elimination of the \$1.3 billion Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Program (Perkins loan) and Cuts by \$15 million from the \$85 million budget of the Boys & Girls Clubs (30 percent).

"We, as mayors are not going to sit by quietly and allow this to happen."

State lawmakers expressed similar concerns.

"It's going to affect the state budgets in a terrible way because most states are already dealing with a crisis in Medicaid," says Rep. Mary H. Coleman (D-Miss.), president of the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. "We're going to be in bad shape all across this country. That's just to put it mildly."

"Short of Ronald Reagan's first budget, we've never had anything like this," recalls Bill Spriggs, senior fellow at the Economics Policy Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based economic research organization.

"It's immoral and obscene. It's immoral, given that he came into power with a surplus. He squandered that surplus. The cuts that he's making do not put a dent in the deficit that he's created. The deficit that he's created comes from the tax cuts — about half of it, and then like another 30-something percent comes from increasing expenditures on security and homeland defense."

The president's announcement of the \$212 billion in cuts from domestic programs over the next five years puts a number of familiar programs in jeopardy.

"Various kinds of services — childcare, health care, education, all sorts of things — are scaled back or reduced. In some local areas, they may charge low and moderate income families fees to use various services or increase the fees," says Robert Greenstein, executive director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

While slashing programs for the poor, President Bush remains committed to tax cuts of \$129 billion over the next five years and \$1.4 trillion over 10 years, mainly benefiting households with incomes of \$200,000 or more. He also proposes to increase defense spending by \$7.2 billion (1.7 percent) and spending for Homeland Security by \$2.7 billion (9.3 percent).

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This is addition to the \$80



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Congress and their senators," says Greenstein.

"There was a very large cut proposed in principle low-income rental assistance for housing two years in a row and it was rejected."

gain with him."

U. S. Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), ranking Democrat on the House Ways and Means Committee, says the only place in the budget where Republicans appear seriously resistant to the president's proposals is on Social Security. He says the budget omits the cost of Bush's plan to privatize Social Security, estimated to be \$23 billion in 2009, and omits the cost of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which totals \$5 million per month.

Politically, Bush may have pressure tactics of his own, says David Covin, president of the National Association of Black Political Scientists. "He'll probably try to get people to pressure them, use the bully pulpit," says Covin, professor of government and ethnic studies at California State University-Sacramento.

"He has the appointment power and a lot of people get their friends rewarded by the appointments that they get.

Spriggs is thinking more about the voting booth: "The only thing we can do is throw the bums out. We just have to be more serious about it."

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