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Commissioner Holliday revives alarm about potential federal school funding cuts; Christian Co. officials worry about limited information to make plans...

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Kentucky New Era, Hopkinsville, July 14, 2012

## Kentucky schools brace for federal funding cuts

By Dennis O'Neil

Kentucky Education Commissioner Terry Holliday warned state school districts Friday of impending federal spending cuts that will affect public school budgets.

According to calculations from the Congressional Budget Office and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, federal funding for Kentucky public schools will be reduced up to \$61 million per year for the next 10 years. The cuts will affect more than 1,350 jobs and nearly 130,000 students, according to a news release from the Kentucky Department of Education.

The CBO predicts 7.8 percent funding cuts while the CBPP predicts 8.4 percent. The reductions will take effect for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins Oct. 1.

Holliday fears the cuts will have a devastating effect on public school budgets.

"We are reviewing the timing of the reductions and will provide support and assistance to school district leaders," Holliday said. "Meanwhile, I encourage school officials to monitor the situation closely. They may also want to reach out to their U.S. Congressional delegations."

The final federal allocations for the upcoming fiscal year haven't been released. KDE provided a chart listing possible cuts and its potential impact on the state's education budget. According to the chart, the cuts would affect school improvement grant funding, special education programs, community learning centers and rural education programs.

For special education programs, the CBO estimates an annual \$12.4 million cut for the next 10 years. For local education agency grants, the CBO estimates an annual \$17 million cut.

The spending reduction comes after the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction failed to produce a bill identifying at least \$1.2 trillion in savings over the next 10 years. According to the KDE news release, their failure triggered an automatic spending-reduction process known as sequestration that includes withholding money originally appropriated for public agencies.

Christian County Public Schools Spokesperson Heather Aubin said they plan to keep a close watch on the funding situation. She said it is hard to plan currently because they haven't been told what programs or funding will be cut.

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## ...two Kentucky university chiefs among higher ed leaders urging President Obama, Congress to avoid sequestration cuts; political divide at issue

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Courier-Journal, Louisville, July 15, 2012

### Budget cut battle

by James R. Carroll

Among the major pieces of unfinished business facing the Congress this year is a looming \$1.2 trillion automatic cut in federal spending scheduled to take effect on Jan. 2.

Unless lawmakers take action to stop it, the cut (also known as sequestration) would be evenly divided between defense programs and domestic programs.

There seems to be a wide belief in Washington that somehow, sometime, Congress and Obama will craft a deal to stop the cuts and still find a way to reduce the deficit.

But there's no sign of real action yet on the horizon, and many signs of disharmony.

Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., joined Friday with House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, Senate Minority Whip Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., and House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, R-Va., in a letter to Obama urging the administration to find a bipartisan solution to the cuts.

The GOP lawmakers said they were concerned about a news report that White House officials are recommending to Senate Democratic leaders a six-month delay in the cuts.

"We are troubled that rather than engaging Congress in a constructive effort to identify and enact responsible savings to replace the across-the-board sequester, your senior staff appears to be suggesting a course of action that could actually be more harmful to our national security and domestic priorities," McConnell and the others wrote.

"As you are undoubtedly aware a delay would not reduce the \$110 billion cut that is required under sequestration," they added. "In fact, such a delay would actually exacerbate the cut's impact since agencies would be forced to absorb the same cut in the three remaining months of the fiscal year rather than over nine months."

Instead of facing the budget cut problem, the Republicans asserted, the administration "is now holding our troops and other important programs hostage in order to foist tax increases on small businesses."

But, the GOP leaders said, they wanted to work with Obama to find "common ground."

#### Universities' take

Many institutions that look to the nation's capital for budgetary assistance are voicing concerns that government leaders need to get cracking.

Count a large number of university and college presidents among those concerned about the looming massive cuts. A letter from 152 presidents and chancellors of universities went to Obama and congressional leaders last week.

Among those signing the letter were Charles R. Bantz, chancellor of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis; Eli Capilouto, president of the University of Kentucky; France Cordova, president of Purdue University; Michael A. McRobbie, president of Indiana University; and Mary E. Sias, president of Kentucky State University.

"We write to urge your bipartisan leadership in forging a major, balanced long-term deficit-reduction agreement that will reduce budget deficits, rein in the nation's debt, and create economic and job growth to ensure our nation's long-term fiscal health and to prevent the indiscriminate cuts of sequestration," the university leaders wrote.

"Sequestration is an undiscerning and blunt budget tool that would substantially harm our nation's future by blindly slashing valuable investments in education and scientific research, as well as other important discretionary programs that provide health, economic, and national security," they continued. "Deficit reduction until now has concentrated almost entirely on non-defense discretionary expenditures, which are only about one-sixth of the budget. Spending on these programs is not the primary cause of our rising debt."

"Wholesale additional reductions in these and other programs that educate and train the next generation risk undermining our nation's human capital, infrastructure, technological, and scientific needs," the presidents warned.

The administration and Congress need to enact tax reform and curb the growth in entitlement programs, they said.

"Americans know that investments in education and scientific research pay long-term dividends," the letter said. "Federal support for scientific research and student financial aid laid the foundation for the dramatic expansion of the 20th century U.S. economy and can do the same in the 21st."

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