

Please read on for information on the housing bill going through the Senate, a report on higher education and training for Massachusetts' working poor, ideas for Equal Pay Day, a report on unionization and its benefits for African Americans, and an article on the increase in food stamp use.

ON THE HILL...

Democratic lawmakers had harsh words for the Administration today following the release of government figures showing the labor force lost jobs for a third consecutive month. Senator Chuck Schumer expressed his view that Congress needs support from the Administration to act on a second stimulus package, one that includes improvements to the nation's infrastructure and unemployment benefits.

The Senate worked this week on a bipartisan bill that responds to the housing crisis with an overhaul of the Federal Housing Administration and tax breaks to homebuilders and other businesses losing money in the current economic slump. The bill also would provide a \$7,000 tax credit spread over two years for the purchases of homes in foreclosure, an extra \$10 billion in bond authority for refinancing distressed subprime mortgages, \$100 million for expanded counseling for borrowers at risk of default, and \$4 billion in Community Development Block Grants to purchase and rehabilitate foreclosed properties. The bill has been panned by consumer and other groups who believe it is a give away to corporate interests while doing virtually nothing for financially distressed homeowners.

What's on tap next week ... The Income Security and Family Support Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee will hold a hearing on Thursday, April 10th, on the possibility of extending unemployment benefits due to the state of the economy. The Workforce Protections Subcommittee of the House Education and Labor Committee will hold a hearing on "the 15th Anniversary of the Family Medical Leave Act: Achievements and Next Steps," also on Thursday, April 10th

IN THE ADMINISTRATION ...

Under pressure from key congressional leaders and facing a criminal probe of his activities, Housing and Urban Development Secretary Alphonso R. Jackson resigned Monday, leaving vacant a key post in the administration's plans to combat home foreclosures. In addition to the investigation for allegations of cronyism, corruption and political favoritism, Members of Congress also have questioned his agency's oversight of millions of dollars in rebuilding grants in the Gulf Coast since the 2005 hurricane season devastated the region. The announcement of his resignation came on the fourth anniversary of his Senate confirmation as secretary.

IN THE STATES...

Massachusetts FESS Partner Releases Report "Unlocking the Doors to Higher Education and Training for Massachusetts' Working Poor Families"

Massachusetts must make changes in its educational system to provide hundreds of thousands of low-income working adults a better opportunity to gain the skills they need to secure family-supporting jobs, according to a report released last month from Crittenton Women's Union. The report, "Unlocking the Doors to Higher Education and Training for Massachusetts' Working Poor Families," details significant problems in the state's educational system that impede low-income working adults—specifically those supporting themselves and their families—from embarking on and paying for higher education.

In particular, the report calls for more financial aid, better counseling and a more-coordinated education system to meet the needs of low-income working adults. The report notes that an increasing number of

family-supporting jobs in the state require some post-secondary education. However, Massachusetts has more than 1.4 million people between the ages of 25 and 54 who do not have an associate's degree or higher level of educational attainment. To view the full report, go to <http://www.liveworkthrive.org/reports.php>.

Maryland: Sweeping Bills Passed To Help Homeowners

Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) signed into law Thursday a sweeping package of emergency legislation that provides immediate help to beleaguered homeowners facing foreclosure while overhauling state regulation of the mortgage-lending industry. Under the new laws, which are among the most ambitious state-level efforts in the country to manage the housing crisis, the timetable of foreclosure is extended to 150 days from 15. O'Malley's emergency laws took effect immediately as the number of people losing their housing in Maryland has risen at a startling pace. In February, more than 4,000 foreclosure actions were taken in Maryland. O'Malley is scheduled to testify before Congress next week about his administration's approach to the housing crisis.

The extension affects those who face foreclosure starting after the bill was signed but does not change prior foreclosures underway. The bills subject the most egregious mortgage schemes to criminal prosecution and allow violators to be sentenced to prison. The bills also ban prepayment penalties and foreclosure rescue transactions, in which homeowners are tricked into signing over their homes to third parties. For more information, see <http://www.gov.state.md.us/pressreleases/080403b.asp>

FROM THE INTEREST GROUPS...

Comparison of Ownership vs. Rental Costs Demonstrates that Rental Options Should Be a Consideration in Housing Proposals

As Congress debates solutions to the mortgage meltdown and more homeowners find themselves facing foreclosure, a report released Thursday by the Center for Economic and Policy Research and the National Low Income Housing Coalition shows that in many bubble-inflated markets, homeownership remains a costly and risky proposition. The study, "The Cost of Maintaining Home Ownership in the Current Crisis: Comparisons in 20 Cities," evaluates the median house price and fair market rent, as determined by HUD, for 20 major metropolitan areas. The findings of the report reveal that the ratio of homeownership to rental costs varies substantially from market to market, and as such, public policy must go further than a one-size-fits-all solution to the current housing crisis.

The study projects that in the bubble markets, most homeowners will leave their homes with large amounts of negative equity. For example, it projects that in New York, homeowners will have \$179,000 of negative equity and in Los Angeles, the shortfall would be \$277,000. In these, and other bubble markets, households would benefit from proposals that attempt to provide affordable rental options as part of policy solutions. For cities where the costs of owning are much closer to rental costs, it is likely that a small amount of equity will be accrued. In these markets, policies that keep owners in their homes, possibly through some form of government-guaranteed mortgage, are preferable. For the report, visit http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/ownrent_2008_04.pdf.

Report: States' Tax Revenues Weaken Again, While Costs for States and Localities Rise Sharply

Tax revenues collected by states during the fourth quarter of 2007 grew only 2.3 percent compared to the same period in 2006, while costs for state and local government services continued a recent trend of sharp

increases, according to the latest report on state finances issued by the Rockefeller Institute of Government. When the effects of inflation and enacted tax changes are factored in, state tax revenues across the nation decreased by 4.3 percent during the quarter. Both by that measure and in nominal terms, state tax revenues were the weakest in almost five years.

Tax revenue growth, compared to the fourth quarter of 2007, was strongest in the Rocky Mountains region. Growth in the southeast states was the weakest. Among individual states, revenues dropped significantly in Oregon, Florida, West Virginia, Mississippi, Arizona and Nevada. Revenue growth was strongest in Alaska, Colorado, Iowa, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota and Texas. The full report is available at <http://www.rockinst.org/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=14556>.

AAUW and Other Women's Organizations Promote Equal Pay Day on Tuesday, April 22

Equal Pay Day, Tuesday, April 22 is the annual symbolic day on which women's average wages catch up to men's from the previous year. Her male counterpart must work five days a week for twelve months, whereas she will work seven days a week for sixteen months to earn equivalent wages. These lingering disparities are disturbing more than 40 years after passage of the Equal Pay Act. In general, women continue to earn only 77 cents on the dollar to their male counterparts. Minority women face an even larger wage gap. Pay disparities affect women of all ages, races, and education levels-regardless of their family decisions.

Many women's organizations across the country will engage in a variety of activities designed to promote pay equity on Equal Pay Day and inform women about the Fair Pay Restoration Act (S. 1843), which addresses the Supreme Court's recent, wrongheaded decision in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company*. For action ideas, tips and resources to use in your community on Equal Pay Day, visit http://www.aauw.org/advocacy/issue_advocacy/actionpages/payequity.cfm and download the Pay Equity Resource Kit. Ideas include having a pay equity bake sale or "unhappy hour," where women get a 23 percent discount while men pay full price, and encouraging women to wear red to represent the way the pay gap puts women "in the red."

Unionization Substantially Improves the Pay and Benefits of African Americans

On April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, where he had traveled to support city sanitation workers who were striking for better pay and working conditions. While much has since changed, a report released this week by the Center for Economic and Policy Research shows that four decades after King's death, unionized African Americans continue to make more money and have better benefits than their non-union counterparts. The report, "Unions and Upward Mobility for African-American Workers," found that unionized black workers earned, on average, 12 percent or \$2 per hour more than their non-union peers. In addition, black workers in unions were much more likely to have health-insurance benefits and a pension plan.

According to the report, which analyzed data from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey, black workers in unions were also 16 percentage points more likely to have employer-provided health insurance and 19 percentage points more likely to have an employer-provided pension plan than black workers who were not in unions. According to the study, unionization has an even more dramatic effect on black workers in low-wage jobs. Among African-American workers in the 15 lowest-paying occupations, union members earned 14 percent more than those workers who were not in unions. The full report can be found at http://www.cepr.net/documents/publications/unions_2008_04.pdf.

IN THE MEDIA... First, an article on the vast increase of food stamp use and the inflated prices of basic goods. Second, an article on Head Start in Rhode Island and the Governor's negative statements toward the program. Third, an article on how state budget crises and cuts affect those most in need.

NATIONAL: As Jobs Vanish and Prices Rise, Food Stamp Use Nears Record

Date: Monday, March 31, 2008

Source: *The New York Times*

Author: *ERIK ECKHOLM*

Driven by a painful mix of layoffs and rising food and fuel prices, the number of Americans receiving food stamps is projected to reach 28 million in the coming year, the highest level since the aid program began in the 1960s.

The number of recipients, who must have near-poverty incomes to qualify for benefits averaging \$100 a month per family member, has fluctuated over the years along with economic conditions, eligibility rules, enlistment drives and natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, which led to a spike in the South.

But recent rises in many states appear to be resulting mainly from the economic slowdown, officials and experts say, as well as inflation in prices of basic goods that leave more families feeling pinched. Citing expected growth in unemployment, the Congressional Budget Office this month projected a continued increase in the monthly number of recipients in the next fiscal year, starting Oct. 1 -- to 28 million, up from 27.8 million in 2008, and 26.5 million in 2007.

The percentage of Americans receiving food stamps was higher after a recession in the 1990s, but actual numbers are expected to be higher this year.

Federal benefit costs are projected to rise to \$36 billion in the 2009 fiscal year from \$34 billion this year.

'People sign up for food stamps when they lose their jobs, or their wages go down because their hours are cut,' said Stacy Dean, director of food stamp policy at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in Washington, who noted that 14 states saw their rolls reach record numbers by last December.

One example is Michigan, where one in eight residents now receives food stamps. 'Our caseload has more than doubled since 2000, and we're at an all-time record level,' said Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the Michigan Department of Human Services.

The climb in food stamp recipients there has been relentless, through economic upturns and downturns, reflecting a steady loss of industrial jobs that has pushed recipient levels to new highs in Ohio and Illinois as well.

'We've had poverty here for a good while,' Ms. Sorbet said. Contributing to the rise, she added, Michigan, like many other states, has also worked to make more low-end workers aware of their eligibility, and a switch from coupons to electronic debit cards has reduced the stigma.

Some states have experienced more recent surges. From December 2006 to December 2007, more than 40 states saw recipient numbers rise, and in several -- Arizona, Florida, Maryland, Nevada, North Dakota and Rhode Island -- the one-year growth was 10 percent or more.

In Rhode Island, the number of recipients climbed by 18 percent over the last two years, to more than 84,000 as of February, or about 8.4 percent of the population. This is the highest total in the last dozen years or more, said Bob McDonough, the state's administrator of family and adult services, and reflects both a strong enlistment effort and an upward creep in unemployment.

In New York, a program to promote enrollment increased food stamp rolls earlier in the decade, but the current climb in applications appears in part to reflect economic hardship, said Michael Hayes, spokesman for the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. The additional 67,000 clients added from July 2007 to January of this year brought total recipients to 1.86 million, about one in 10 New Yorkers.

Nutrition and poverty experts praise food stamps as a vital safety net that helped eliminate the severe malnutrition seen in the country as recently as the 1960s. But they also express concern about what they called the gradual erosion of their value.

Food stamps are an entitlement program, with eligibility guidelines set by Congress and the federal government paying for benefits while states pay most administrative costs.

Eligibility is determined by a complex formula, but basically recipients must have few assets and incomes below 130 percent of the poverty line, or less than \$27,560 for a family of four.

As a share of the national population, food stamp use was highest in 1994, after several years of poor economic growth, with an average of 27.5 million recipients per month from a lower total of residents. The numbers plummeted in the late 1990s as the economy grew and legal immigrants and certain others were excluded.

But access by legal immigrants has been partly restored and, in the current decade, the federal and state governments have used advertising and other measures to inform people of their eligibility and have often simplified application procedures.

Because they spend a higher share of their incomes on basic needs like food and fuel, low-income Americans have been hit hard by soaring gasoline and heating costs and jumps in the prices of staples like milk, eggs and bread.

At the same time, average family incomes among the bottom fifth of the population have been stagnant or have declined in recent years at levels around \$15,500, said Jared Bernstein, an economist at the Economic Policy Institute in Washington.

The benefit levels, which can amount to many hundreds of dollars for families with several children, are adjusted each June according to the price of a bare-bones 'thrifty food plan,' as calculated by the Department of Agriculture. Because food prices have risen by about 5 percent this year, benefit levels will rise similarly in June -- months after the increase in costs for consumers.

Advocates worry more about the small but steady decline in real benefits since 1996, when the 'standard deduction' for living costs, which is subtracted from family income to determine eligibility and benefit levels, was frozen. If that deduction had continued to rise with inflation, the average mother with two children would be receiving an additional \$37 a month, according to the private Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.

Both houses of Congress have passed bills that would index the deduction to the cost of living, but the measures are part of broader agriculture bills that appear unlikely to pass this year because of disagreements with the White House over farm policy.

Another important federal nutrition program known as WIC, for women, infants and children, is struggling with rising prices of milk and cheese, and growing enrollment.

The program, for households with incomes no higher than 185 percent of the federal poverty level, provides healthy food and nutrition counseling to 8.5 million pregnant women, and children through the age of 4. WIC is not an entitlement like food stamps, and for the fiscal year starting in October, Congress may have to approve a large increase over its current budget of \$6 billion if states are to avoid waiting lists for needy mothers and babies.

RI: Governor chided for Head Start comments

Date: Monday, March 31, 2008

Source: *The Providence Journal-Bulletin (Rhode Island)*

Author: *Cynthia Needham*

PROVIDENCE — Legislators, education advocates and even the medical community are blasting Governor Carcieri for calling Head Start a “waste of money” and a “dismal failure,” saying the governor was ignoring strong evidence of the success of the federal program.

Carcieri made the comments last week, barely seven months after he sent a letter to the Congress praising “the essential role that Head Start plays in providing comprehensive school readiness services to children and their families.”

Head Start supporters say they don’t understand what prompted the governor to so strongly dismiss the merits of a program that has a proven track record of providing effective education and daycare services to disadvantaged preschool children.

The clash began Wednesday, a day when more than 300 youngsters and their teachers gathered at the State House to protest the governor’s plan to eliminate 400 of 2,750 Head Start slots statewide and shift \$3.3 million in federal dollars to cover possible enrollment increases in the state’s subsidized child-care program.

Addressing the protesters’ concerns later that afternoon, Carcieri said the following:

“Show me empirical evidence that Head Start has done anything. I think it’s been the biggest waste of money, frankly. What Head Start needs to do is get into the early education business, which is teach kids vocabulary and things they need early on. Head Start, I think, is the biggest waste of federal money. What I’ve said, if you want to do early childhood education, particularly in urban areas, get Head Start integrated into what we’re trying to do with kids. ... If you want empirical evidence that a program has been a dismal failure, I’d put Head Start at the top of the list. That doesn’t say it can’t be changed or morphed into something that could be effective, but as it is I think it’s totally ineffective.”

Since then, Carcieri has offered little data to support his statements and has declined to speak further to *The Journal* on the topic.

Legislators including Rep. Eileen S. Naughton, D-Warwick, called his comments unfounded. “I’m outraged. With just a simple Google search and a couple of clicks, there is tremendous data about [Head Start’s successes],” she said.

Rep. Thomas Slater, D-Providence, said that calling the program “a dismal failure” was the governor’s way of “showing Don Carcieri’s true feelings about the state and the people in the state.”

Carcieri’s recent comments stand in sharp contrast to those contained in a letter sent to Congress on Sept. 5, 2007.

That letter, signed by Carcieri in his capacity as chairman of the of the association’s education, early childhood and workforce committee, along with the panel’s vice chairman, Gov. Brad Henry, D-Okla., was addressed to the leaders of the House and Senate committees on health and education committees.

In it, the governors called for Congress to grant them more control over the appointment of local advisory panels, extend eligibility for Head Start to children in families living below 130 percent of the federal poverty level, boost the educational requirement for Head-Start teachers and require Head Start agencies to enter into memoranda of understanding with local education agencies or councils to coordinate activities.

Research pointing to Head Start’s achievements is substantial. Federal studies demonstrate that on the whole the program better prepares low-income children for the academic rigors of school. That’s particularly true in recent years, when the federal government has directed Head Start programs nationwide to better emphasize educational services including early math and reading curriculum, half a dozen supporters interviewed said.

“The governor’s statement flies in the face of the some of the newest empirical data that we have on Head Start, which comes from developmental psychologists, political scientists and economists,” said Georgetown University psychology and public policy Prof. Deborah Phillips, a national expert on early childhood.

“I don’t think [the governor] wants to put himself in that position. It leaves him very vulnerable to be out of touch with the newest data and literature.”

Here in Rhode Island, Head Start supporters had much the same reaction.

After hearing Carcieri’s comments, Rhode Island Kids Count Executive Director Elizabeth Burke Bryant sent him copies of the latest Head Start research, including an academic study that shows “significant gains at pre-math and pre-literacy levels” which are critical to help a child keep pace in elementary school.

Hasbro Children’s Hospital pediatrician and Brown medical school Prof. Dr. Brian Alverson said the benefits of Head Start reach far beyond the classroom.

“Compared to non-enrolled students, children going through these programs are more likely to graduate from high school, are more likely to own a home, are less likely to have problems with the law and less likely to get pregnant as teenagers,” said Alverson, who heads the legislative advocacy committee of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

But Gary Alexander, director of the state Department of Human Services, which administers the Rhode Island program, said Head Start, while seeing some successes over the years, has been met with mixed reviews nationwide. “There just isn’t a complete and total proven fact that Head Start is an unqualified success,” he said.

Many of those much-lauded gains made at the preschool level are short lived and can quickly fade as children get older, he said, contending that without lasting improvements the program’s overall value must be questioned. He pointed to the economics book *Freakonomics*, by Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, which draws much the same conclusion about Head Start’s merits.

Program supporters say such statistics, while true, often rely on data from a decade or more ago when Head Start programs were less rigorous. Students’ academic troubles may have more to do with socioeconomic factors and the quality of the elementary schools they attend than with Head Start programs, they say.

But some of Rhode Island’s Head Start programs — and those nationwide — have also seen serious management problems. In October, Providence Head Start was temporarily shut down by the federal government, and an interim contractor was brought in to run the program after federal authorities discovered that the agency was not properly conducting criminal background checks on its employees. Months later, that program is still run by the contractor.

Despite all that, Alexander characterized the plan to cut 400 children from Head Start programs as a budgetary decision, not a philosophical one. The state, he said, is trying to preserve “as much of the core programs as it can,” but in doing so must also trim a variety of services.

Phillips, the Georgetown professor, called such cuts “a shortsighted response” to a budget problem. When compared with the public savings Head Start could bring in future decades, the initial cost of the program is well worth it, she said.

“Is this a program that should be defunded? No, this is a program that should on the whole be celebrated.”

NATIONAL: States Are Hit Hard by Economic Downturn; Many Cutbacks Felt by Most Needy

Date: Monday, March 31, 2008

Source: *The Washington Post*

Author: *Keith B. Richburg and Ashley Surdin*

DATELINE: NEW YORK

In Illinois' Cook County, women in poor neighborhoods no longer have access to free mammograms from two mobile vans testing for breast cancer.

In Michigan, hikers will find about 20 campgrounds closed, and scientists are ending their studies of fish populations in the Great Lakes.

In New Jersey, state workers are being laid off, and at least one town is canceling its traditional Fourth of July fireworks.

And in California's San Fernando Valley, Everardo Orozco, 53, who has AIDS, exhausted his medical benefits and can no longer afford the drugs that are keeping him alive.

"I don't know which ones I can afford every month," Orozco said, explaining how his supply is dwindling and his share of the payments has skyrocketed from \$400 to \$3,200 per month. He now injects himself with some medications once a day instead of twice -- not enough to keep his T-cell count from dropping or to prevent his body from becoming resistant to treatment. And he fears that there will be more cuts.

State budgets have been hit hard by a worsening national economy, including rising costs for energy and health care. In addition, fallout from the subprime mortgage crisis -- declining home sales, deflated property values and mounting foreclosures -- has caused a slide in states' anticipated tax receipts. Revenue from property taxes, sales taxes and real estate transfer taxes is affected.

At least half of the nation's states are facing budget shortfalls, some of them severe, and policymakers in most of the states affected are proposing and passing often-painful measures to trim costs and close the gaps. Spending on schools is being slashed, after-school programs are being curtailed and teachers are being notified of potential layoffs. Health-care assistance is being cut for the elderly, the disabled and the poor. Some government offices, such as motor vehicle department locations, will start closing on weekends, and some state workers are receiving pink slips.

Some analysts worry that the impact is being felt disproportionately by the most needy.

"It's disappointing, the extent they tend to focus their cuts on the most vulnerable," said Iris J. Lav, deputy director of the Washington-based Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal think tank that monitors state budget issues. "It does appear to disproportionately affect low-income people."

Unlike the federal government, which can run deficits, almost all states are required by their own laws and constitutions to balance their budgets. Many states are just now hammering out their budgets, so some targeted programs could still be saved in last-minute negotiations.

In most states, talk of raising taxes has become politically perilous, particularly with residents already hurting from falling housing values and a worsening economy.

Only half a dozen states have approved, or are considering, tax increases, including Maryland and Michigan, both of which raised taxes in 2007. In New Jersey, which has a \$3 billion deficit, Gov. Jon S. Corzine (D) has proposed eliminating or reducing most property tax rebates. In New York, facing a \$5 billion shortfall, an idea in the General Assembly for a new income tax for people making more than \$1 million per year died last week after the Republican-controlled Senate, and Gov. David A. Paterson (D), strongly opposed it.

Instead of raising taxes, most states with shortfalls are curtailing services, and the effects are already being felt nationwide. Some of the most dramatic cuts are being made in California, Maine and Rhode Island, according to budget experts, with New Jersey not far behind.

California is facing the worst budget crisis, with a \$16 billion shortfall, and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has proposed a \$4.8 billion cut in education services. About 20,000 teachers, counselors, librarians, nurses and other support staff members have received notice of potential layoffs, according to the state's Education Department.

Los Angeles, which has the state's largest school district and a \$6 billion budget, faces a \$460 million cut for the next school year -- the dollar equivalent of shutting down the entire district for two weeks.

In Thousand Oaks, Calif., the Conejo Valley Unified School District, home to 30 schools and 22,000 students, has already closed two elementary schools for next year. Superintendent Mario Contini said layoffs could be next. "School districts have been making cuts every year, and there isn't much left to cut," he said. "We've already cut the flesh to the bone, and now we're removing the skeletal parts. It's that severe."

Schwarzenegger has also proposed \$650 million in cuts to the Healthy Families Program and Medi-Cal, which together provide health-care services to more than 7 million senior citizens, disabled people and children in the state. Adults under the Medi-Cal program would lose their dental benefits, as well as optometry and psychology services.

The California Department of Public Health is also facing an \$11 million cut to AIDS services, with the bulk of that -- \$7 million -- coming from a program that helps low-income Californians, such as Orozco, obtain lifesaving antiretroviral medicine.

Orozco had been paying \$400 per month for the 15 daily medications he needs. But when his allotment under the program ran out, his share jumped to \$3,200, and he could no longer afford five of the drugs.

"We want to continue to live, you know," he said. "We need to continue fighting what this is. I've been dealing with this since 1983. Every day, it's a fight. It's not easy. Either they help us do something to fight this, or we're going to die."

A recent 50-state survey by the Associated Press showed that hundreds of thousands of poor children, the disabled and the elderly stand to have their health coverage eliminated as a result of budget cuts, and more than 10 million people would lose access to dental care, specialists and name-brand prescription drugs.

Budget experts said they see a repeat of the pattern that happened during the recession of 2001: States generally cut health services and medical benefits first, because these costs are often rising more rapidly than others, and the savings tend to be immediate.

Subsidies to higher education are also a favored target for budget cuts -- mainly because policymakers often believe that universities can find money from other sources, such as private donations or higher tuition.

Budgets for parks and recreation, and for natural resources and science, also stand to take a hit.

In cash-strapped Michigan, dealing with the struggles of the automobile industry, the Department of Natural Resources is closing 20 campgrounds, including the highly popular and rustic Pinney Bridge State Forest Campground, considered one of the most beautiful in the Lower Peninsula. The department also plans to end its studies of fish populations in the Great Lakes, and 14 conservation officials are being laid off.

Hunters in Michigan will also find their license fees increased.

In Illinois, Gov. Rod Blagojevich (D) has proposed ending a popular controlled pheasant-hunting program at state sites. Outraged hunters have said that among those affected will be the young and the handicapped, who have access to special hunts under the state program.

Surdin reported from Los Angeles. Staff writer Kari Lydersen in Chicago contributed to this report.