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SPORTS

Dixie's majors team among seven champions crowned at Little League Championships



SLOW BURN

Sequestration is starting to take its toll on S. Utah



Firefighters battle a wildfire west of Diamond Valley on Aug. 22, 2011.

By David DeMille and Kevin Jenkins
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ST. GEORGE — When congressional leaders and President Barack Obama failed to reach a deal to stop a series of automatic budget cuts in March, the immediate impacts of “sequestration” weren’t as dire as some had feared. There were no massive job losses or sudden shutdowns of government programs, and most agencies were able to tweak budgets enough to maintain operations. In some cases where the cuts

posed serious threats — such as when cuts to air traffic controllers caused delays at airports — the government stepped in with funding patches.

But many weren’t spared, with the cuts hitting everything from early childhood education to public safety and firefighting.

Thousands of military civilians and employees of the National Guard could lose up to 20 percent of their income. Programs for children and seniors are seeing services reduced. Fewer resources are available to deal with federal lands. There is less money available for scientific research, less



Patricia Lord tells a joke from Readers Digest to a group at the St. George Senior Center on Sept. 15, 2012. PHOTOS BY JUD BURKETT / THE SPECTRUM & DAILY NEWS

help for nonprofit groups and real fear about how the economy will respond.

Some economists predict that much of the real pain could come at the end of the federal fiscal year in October.

“That’s the big question right now. At this point in time we don’t really know,” said Nick Howell,

fire information officer with the Bureau of Land Management. “Our fiscal year ends in October, but it remains to be seen what our final budget is going to look like.”

Firefighting agencies are on the defensive after about 600 wildland firefighters were cut just before

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JROTC plans fundraiser in wake of sequester cuts

By Kevin Jenkins
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ST. GEORGE — Students in Washington County’s Air Force JROTC program learned this spring that they won’t receive an expected reimbursement of \$12,000 for travel costs as a consequence of the se-

quester, and further cuts are in the works.

The JROTC has planned a charity golf tournament Thursday to help with costs, but the funding cuts have created a fiscal mountain for the cadets to climb.

“It’s hard to make up that kind of money when you don’t have any-

thing to do but fund-raise,” said Senior Master Sgt. Gerald “Doc” Thomas.

The JROTC program serves 11 area high schools and middle schools, teaching citizenship and leadership skills under a military preparatory model, although the cadets have no military obligation, and

most don’t pursue military careers.

The program began seven years ago with 67 students and has grown steadily to about 400 cadets since then, adding instructors and leadership divisions along the way.

JROTC rules require the cadets

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Government snooping comes with hefty price tag

Phone, tech companies charge US millions to give records

By Anne Flaherty
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — How much are your private conversations worth to the government? Turns out, it can be a lot, depending on the technology.

In the era of intense government surveillance and secret court orders, a murky multi-

million-dollar market has emerged. Paid for by U.S. tax dollars, but with little public scrutiny, surveillance fees charged in secret by technology and phone companies can vary wildly.

AT&T, for example, imposes a \$325 “activation fee” for each wiretap and \$10 a day to maintain it. Smaller carriers Cricket

and U.S. Cellular charge only about \$250 per wiretap. But snoop on a Verizon customer? That costs the government \$775 for the first month and \$500 each month after that, according to industry disclosures made last year to Rep. Edward Markey, D-Mass.

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Microsoft's headquarters in Washington. ELAINE THOMPSON/AP



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Burn

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the fire season, and potential cuts in October could limit or eliminate programs in order to prevent catastrophic fires — programs that firefighters consider essential to managing the size and scope of the fires that do occur.

"It's extremely essential — not only the mechanical fuels reduction but our ability to take care of these fires after they burn," Howell said.

Beginning impacts

Others have already felt the effects, including some of the community's most vulnerable.

A \$170,000 cut has shut down the Head Start preschool offerings in Milford and Panguitch, leaving parents in those small, remote areas without many options to find child care.

"I don't understand this," said Bonnie Albrecht, who taught the Milford class. "It really is affecting a lot of people, and it's affecting ones who are low income and have no way of paying for daycare."

Albrecht said there are no private preschools in the town, and for the parents of the 17 children who were in the Head Start program, there is nowhere to turn.

"It was a really tough decision," Executive Director Thomas Morgan said of closing the schools in Milford and Panguitch, adding that while his office has scrambled to deal with this year's cuts, it could face more if Congress fails to come up with a budget solution.

"I don't think many people realize the se-

quester is a yearly thing," he said. "So come the first of the year, we could get hit by another cut."

That's part of the fear with senior centers, where locally there was \$62,000 taken out of this year's budget.

That amounts to about a 5 percent hit, and so far coordinators have been able to adjust and keep services whole, said Carrie Schonlaw, director of Aging and Human Services for the Five County Association of Governments. However, the fear is what happens in the near future, with more potential cuts coming and the aging population growing rapidly.

"If everything stays status quo and nothing changes, then Oct. 1 we'll kind of be doing the same thing — watching and waiting to see what happens," she said.

Justice system

Even the criminal justice system is feeling the pinch. Prosecutors and public defense attorneys in Utah's federal court system have already experienced some effects of the sequester's reduced funding and are anticipating that things will just get worse in October.

"Folks continue to work very hard here to make sure the federal laws and everybody's rights to receive justice are still protected," U.S. Attorney David Barlow said. "There's no doubt the sequester is already having an effect. ... We didn't have to furlough (employees) in the past year, but that didn't mean we didn't have to make cuts."

Among training and conference events that have been reduced or eliminated, Barlow cited

a national terrorism enforcement conference Utah hosts each year. The conference draws law enforcement personnel from across the country but was put on the chopping block to accommodate Utah's portion of the \$1.6 billion in national funding cuts to the federal prosecutors office.

Barlow said the Department of Justice cuts nationwide are expected to increase to about \$2.2 billion for the new fiscal year. Barlow said he couldn't supply figures on specific funding cuts in Utah, but said the state is "bearing our share of it."

Representatives from the federal public defender's office didn't respond to requests for comment, but Barlow said he understands the defense attorneys are also experiencing "pressure" as a result of the sequester.

Southern Utah

How all of that might affect Southern Utah remains uncertain.

Federal law enforcement officers work with state, county and municipal agencies on issues ranging from white-collar crime to marijuana farm enforcement in Southern Utah.

In January 2010, the recent completion of the new 5th District Courthouse in St. George led federal law enforcement agencies to increase resources in the southern part of the state. Officers, attorneys and defendants previously had to make multiple trips to Salt Lake City to hear elements of their cases, but the courthouse provided resources for Salt Lake City-based U.S. District Judge Ted Stewart to travel to St. George once a month to conduct

trials and sentencings, saving expenses for the others.

"Unless something changes, there's a very high probability of significant furloughs (state-wide), and obviously fewer work days has the unfortunate effect of limiting ... resources," Barlow said.

"(But) our operations in Washington County are very important. I know they're greatly appreciated by our law enforcement partners. ... (And) that work is going to continue," he said.

The so-called sequestration was a set of automatic cuts originally proposed in 2012 as a painful fallback that would force Democrats and Republicans to reach a more palatable plan to reduce the federal deficit.

But the two sides were unable to reach an agreement, instigating the \$85 billion in cuts that represent only a small percentage of the nation's \$1.37 trillion annual deficit but indiscriminately slash programs and services that would be unlikely to face cuts if the government were to take a more targeted approach.

The Senate, controlled by Democrats, passed a budget in March that called for new taxes and spending cuts to replace the sequester, but Republicans balked at the proposal. Democrats, meanwhile, have opposed Republican plans that call for steeper cuts. The two sides will likely need to reach another stopgap spending measure in September in order to avoid a government shutdown.

U.S. Rep. Chris Stewart, a Republican who represents southwestern Utah in the House, said that he thinks the seques-

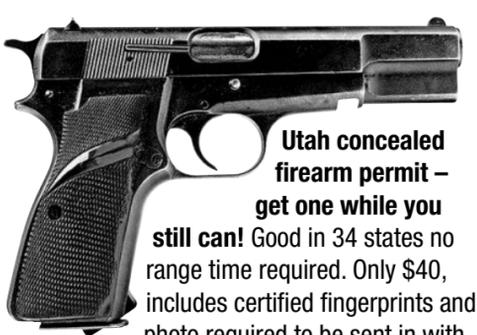


Children sing songs at SUU Head Start on Mar. 15 in Cedar City. KINA WILDE / THE SPECTRUM & DAILY NEWS

ter could be replaced with "common-sense reforms" to reduce spending, but blamed Democratic President Obama for being "unwilling to engage in a meaningful process to reduce spending on discretionary programs."

"We desperately need to cut federal spending, but I've always said that there is a better way to do it than through the sequester," he said. "I feel for communities throughout Utah that are enduring the effects."

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JROTC

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to take a Curriculum In Action field trip each year to further their learning outside the classroom, said retired USAF Col. Glenn Whicker, the program's senior instructor.

"We've always tried to enhance it and do two or three CIA trips a year. The requirement's still there to do at least one, but (now) there's no funding for it," Whicker said. "And now it's gone a little bit further than that. (The JROTC program has) basically lost all activity funding. Starting Oct. 1 we won't get any. ... The only thing that's going to be funded the next school year is the teachers' salaries — and uniforms."

The cuts also affect some administrative and supply expenses, as well as funding for required summer orientation camps and the flight orientation program, he said.

"We've paid (last year's) bill, but we paid it with the intent of being reimbursed," Whicker said.

IF YOU GO

» **What:** Air Force JROTC Charity Golf Tournament, for sequester recovery.

» **When:** Thursday, 7:30 a.m.

» **Where:** Sun River Golf Course, 4210 S. Bluegrass Way, St. George.

» **Cost:** \$500 per team.

» **Information or to register:** 673-1718.

"We ended up with about \$12,000 less from the Air Force than last year. Next year it will be closer to \$25,000 less. That's a significant chunk."

Thursday's charity golf event at the Sun River Golf Course will be the youths' first foray into a tournament to help with activity costs. The \$500 team registration fee includes 18 holes, golf cart use, lunch and a T-shirt.

The tournament will be a scramble format with a shotgun start, and will include a Coleman trailer for a hole-in-one prize.

"We must invest in our youth, many of whom will be the future leaders and protectors of our country," Whicker said.

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