



## America the Busybody, at Home and Abroad

These are times that try nations' budgets. Even President Obama is talking seriously about budget cutting — not as seriously as the Republicans claim they are, but hey, give the guy credit. He has proposed trimming \$100 billion from this year's spending level to produce a 2012 budget of a mere \$3.7 trillion. He proposes reducing the deficit by \$544 billion, so that next year's budget will produce only \$1.1 trillion in red ink. And the long-term budget projections are for an additional \$7 trillion in public debt (now at more than \$14 trillion) over the next 10 years. There, now. How's that for frugality? Eat your heart out, Calvin Coolidge.



While leaving the biggest entitlement programs — Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid — untouched, the Obama budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1 offers spending cuts in what the [New York Times](#) calls "an array of domestic programs," including community services and environmental protection. And the President calls for \$78 billion less in military spending than was proposed by the Department of Defense. The budget will increase spending, however, on education, transportation and research. The President's stab at austerity falls well short of the proposal by the bipartisan budget deficit commission he appointed, which recommended cutting \$4 trillion from the budgets of the next 10 years.

Still, any budget cuts are sure to make various constituencies unhappy and we will no doubt hear cries of doom from those involved in administering and those otherwise benefiting from the affected community service and environmental programs. And, of course, Pentagon officials and any number of military contractors will likely swear that a military budget of a mere \$700 billion or so will reduce our defenses to little more than pea shooters, popguns and poison ivy.

Governments at all levels are dealing with budget crises and facing spending cuts sure to be unpopular. My hometown newspaper today tells us the Governor of New Hampshire is about to submit budget cuts that will put 255 state employees out of work and eliminate a total of 1,100 state jobs, most of which have already been left vacant. School district officials told our local school board that proposed budget cuts would have a devastating effect on education in the city of Manchester. Everywhere people are singing the budget blues.

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But President Obama must have found a money tree somewhere on the White House grounds that he can shake for billions of dollars whenever he needs them. In a speech carried live on Egyptian state television last Friday, our President promised the crowd in Cairo's Tahir Square continued American support for Egypt, following the resignation of President Hosni Mubarak. The United States currently spends \$250 million in economic aid and \$1.3 billion in military aid to Egypt, but the White House and State Department are reportedly discussing [plans to set aside new funds](#) to support the rise of secular



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political parties in the land of the Pharaohs.

Apparently 300 million Americans are not enough of an audience for promises of Obama's bounty and goodness. He's now making promises of support to crowds halfway around the world. We can't afford to pay for the government our Democrats and Republicans have given us and we need to support political parties in Egypt? And, of course, Obama has been telling the Egyptians what he expects of their new government, informing the folks in Cairo that "nothing less than genuine democracy will carry the day."

"That means protecting the rights of Egypt's citizens, lifting the emergency law, revising the Constitution and other laws to make this change irreversible, and laying out a clear path to elections that are fair and free," the President said. "Above all, this transition must bring all of Egypt's voices to the table."

All well and good, but didn't "We the People" give Obama the job of presiding over *this government here in this country*? Is that not enough of a challenge for him? Why does he feel called upon to instruct the Egyptians on how their government must be restructured and how they must go about it? Has our own Constitution been revised, so that its purpose is no longer to "form a more perfect union," but to reform the entire, imperfect world?

Perhaps if the Egyptians are attentive to Mr. Obama's lectures, he will be so good as to send them our Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, to instruct them on early childhood education. Mr. Duncan yesterday saw fit to lecture New Jersey Senate Republicans over a plan they presented to Republican Gov. Chris Christie to cut the funding for preschool to cover only half-day programs in urban areas and divert \$300 million to suburban schools.

"New Jersey's broke, and if we had unlimited resources it would certainly be nice to fund all the programs under the sun, but we don't," [State Sen. Michael Doherty](#), a Republican from Warren County, told the *Star-Ledger* of Newark. Doherty said taxpayers in the suburban communities have been subsidizing the urban schools and have not received their fair share of school funding. "It's free pre-school being paid for by the rest of us," he said. But Duncan apparently knows what needs to be done for schools in New Jersey and everywhere else in the land.

"I don't think, frankly, we need another study to demonstrate the long-term benefits of quality early childhood programs," the Secretary said in a teleconference from Washington. "Scaling back on early childhood programs is something that is not in the best interest of our communities, or ultimately our states, because we have to close achievement gaps." Duncan voiced concern for the parents of the preschoolers as well as the children.

"Half-day programs that are two and a half or three hours, that's not enough time for children and I don't know how working families or a mom working two or three jobs trying to make ends meet, I don't see how these families could negotiate that or figure that out," Duncan said. Perhaps parents in New Jersey and at least some of their legislators have figured out that one reason they struggle to make ends meet is the taxes they have to pay for all the things that "good government" folks like Arne Duncan believe their government should provide for them. Gov. Christie and the people of New Jersey don't have that money tree President Obama seems to have. Obama must have shaken it again because Secretary Duncan announced plans for a \$350 million program to allow states to compete for federal funding of "high-quality early child education."

Federal money is free, of course, so that program won't burden those taxpaying moms and dads who are trying to make ends meet. But in the real world legislators have to do the job people elected them to



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do by making tough decisions about how to allocate limited resources, whether or not the U.S. Secretary of Education approves of those allocations.

The Obama administration is issuing congratulatory messages about freedom and self-government in Egypt. It should respect the same in New Jersey.



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