



Fifty-seven Good Things About the Sequester

The across-the-board government spending cuts known as the “sequester,” although delayed by the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012, finally kicked in on March 1.

This only means that the federal government will reduce the amount by which it increases spending. As succinctly explained by [Daniel Mitchell](#) of the Cato Institute: “A sequester merely means that spending climbs by \$2.4 trillion over the next 10 years rather than \$2.5 trillion.”



But this does not mean that liberals and progressives, joined by conservative advocates of ever-increasing defense budgets, are not lamenting how terrible it will be that federal government will have to “cut” a miniscule amount from its \$3.5 trillion budget.

There are 57 ways the sequester could sting you, says [Jeanne Sahadi](#), a senior writer at CNNMoney. She was “going to list 58,” but figured: “I had made the point: The sequester would touch many, many government programs and services.” The following 57 things are her “somewhat random sampling” of the bad things that could happen when the sequester takes effect. But because I see most of these things instead as good things about the sequester, I have added my comments after the bullet points in her 14 categories.

Criminal Justice

- All FBI workers furloughed for up to 14 days
- More than 36,000 Bureau of Prisons workers furloughed for average of 12 days
- 5,100 Marshals Service workers furloughed for up to 13 days
- Increased safety risk for prison inmates and staff
- Fewer firearms inspections

We will certainly see fewer terrorist plots if FBI workers are furloughed since it is the FBI that spends thousands of man hours and hundreds of thousands of dollars to sucker people into undertaking some ridiculous terrorist plot so it can be foiled by the FBI to justify its budget. If the federal government ended its evil war on drugs 36,000 Bureau of Prisons workers could be furloughed permanently along with 5,100 U.S. Marshals. With fewer inmates in federal prison for the non-crime of drug offenses, everything will be safer for prison inmates and staff. And since when is it the job of the federal government to inspect firearms or regulate firearms in any way? There is certainly no constitutional authority for the federal government to have anything to do with guns or gun control. And this is true with or without the Second Amendment.

Defense

- Up to 46,000 temporary workers laid off
- Up to 800,000 full-time civilian workers furloughed for up to 22 days



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- Training curtailed
- Ship, aircraft, weapons-systems and facilities maintenance curbed
- Reduced readiness for two-thirds of active Army brigade combat teams and most Air Force flying units

This could be the best thing about the sequester. Since the United States spends as much or more on its military than the rest of the world combined, any cuts to the “defense” budget, since it is really the “offense” budget, should be welcomed. Those on the receiving end of U.S. bombs and bullets will be glad to hear that readiness will be reduced for the Army and Air Force. If only the readiness of the Navy and Marine Corp could be reduced as well. Foreigners will also be glad to hear that maintenance of ships, aircraft, and weapons systems will be curbed. And if the military limited its activities to actually defending the country there would be much less of a need for maintenance of these things. All the talk about defense cuts by the defense department, its contractors, and Republican warmongers in Congress is just a ruse to scare the American people into thinking that the country will be less safe and subject to terrorist attacks.

Education

- Up to 70,000 kids lose access to Head Start programs
- More than 14,000 teachers and staff laid off
- Cuts in support for up to 1.2 million disadvantaged students
- 33,000 fewer students on work-study
- 71,000 fewer recipients of supplemental grants

The federal Department of Education employs about 3,600 bureaucrats in the nation’s capital and five other locations. There are also another 1,400 staff members who work in ten regional offices. Note that Sahadi doesn’t mention any of them getting laid off, which would be the best thing that could happen for the federal budget and for the education of children. But sequester or no sequester, since the Constitution doesn’t authorize the federal government to have anything to do with education, there should be no Head Start, no payments to states and localities for teachers and disadvantaged students, and no federal work-study programs or grants for higher education. Ideally, of course, there should be a complete separation of school and state. But as things stand now, there is a provision for public schooling in every state constitution. Education should be entirely a state matter; the federal government should have absolutely nothing to do with it. No standards, no mandates, and no funding.

Energy and Nuclear Safety

- Reduced oversight and audits of Energy Department nuclear facilities
- Delayed cleanup of Cold War nuclear weapons sites
- Curtailed operation at basic science labs
- Slowdown in development of oil, gas, and coal on federal land and water

It is no surprise that the federal government, the Department of Energy, and/or opponents of cuts in government spending would mention “nuclear facilities” and “nuclear weapons sites.” This is designed to scare the public into believing that something really bad could happen because of the sequester when in actuality there are a thousand things that the Department of Energy could cut before reducing



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“oversight and audits” and “cleanup” of nuclear facilities and sites. The question that is never asked is why the federal government is tasked with overseeing nuclear facilities in the first place. There is no constitutional justification whatsoever for the federal government to have an energy department or an energy policy. And the same goes for basic science labs. The Cold War ended in 1989. Why is it taking so long for the government to clean up nuclear weapons sites? And if it has taken this long, then why all the alarm about a little further delay? As for the “slowdown in development of oil, gas, and coal on federal land and water,” there is a simple solution: The federal government should sell off all its land and only own the District of Columbia and a few *essential* military bases.

Foreign Affairs

- Cuts to foreign and humanitarian aid
- Reduced ability to help Americans abroad
- Constraints on counter-terrorism efforts

The United States takes about \$40 billion a year out of the hands of taxpayers and sends it to corrupt foreign governments and their cronies. Foreign aid is the first thing that ought to be cut from the federal budget. How many Americans would voluntarily give money to any foreign government if the U.S. government went door-to-door taking a collection? Those that want to donate money, clothes, etc. are perfectly free to do so. There is nothing stopping an American from giving whatever amount of anything he wants to give to Israel, Egypt, Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Sudan, or any other country the United States gives away taxpayer money to. If the United States would stop creating terrorists with its horrendous foreign policy and reckless use of the military then it wouldn't have to devote as much resources to counter-terrorism efforts. Making fewer enemies of the United States would also reduce the amount of help that Americans abroad might need. But really, there are million other things in the federal budget that could be cut before the ability to help Americans abroad was jeopardized.

Health and Safety

- Nationwide shutdown of meat and poultry plants for up to 15 days
- 2,100 fewer FDA safety inspections of food manufacturers
- Increased risk of wildfires
- 1,200 fewer inspections of dangerous workplaces
- Up to 91,000 lose access to substance abuse treatment
- 424,000 fewer HIV tests

Why should meat and poultry plants have to shut down because of anything the federal government does or doesn't do? Why is the FDA doing safety inspections? Why is OSHA doing workplace inspections? What constitutional authority is there for having an FDA and an OSHA in the first place? What business is it of the federal government (or any government) to provide people with substance abuse treatment or test people for HIV? And nothing the federal government does should have any bearing whatsoever on the risk of wildfires.

Homeland Security

- Many frontline law enforcement personnel furloughed for up to 14 days
- Reduced border security



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- Scaled-back cyber security protection of infrastructure

In only 10 short years the Department of Homeland Security has grown to become the third-largest federal department and probably the most hated. But what is the point of having a Homeland Security Department if we already have a Defense Department? Any legitimate functions of the Department of Homeland Security (and they would certainly not include FEMA or the TSA) could and should be part of the Department of Defense.

Housing

- 100,000 removed from housing and emergency shelter programs
- 125,000 may lose benefits from Housing Choice Voucher program
- 75,000 fewer households get foreclosure prevention, rental, and pre-purchase counseling
- Deferred maintenance and repairs in public housing

The federal government has no constitutional authority to be a landlord. There should be no such thing as public housing. It should be sold off immediately. Neither does the federal government have any constitutional authority to have housing, emergency shelter, or voucher programs. And since when should the federal government be in the counseling business? There would not be a need for foreclosure prevention counseling if the federal government had not caused the housing bubble. The federal government's intervention into housing needs a permanent sequester. No public housing, no housing assistance, no FHA, no Freddie Mac, no Fannie Mae, non HAMP, no FHEO, no GNMA, no TBRA, no PBRA, and no HUD.

Job Training

- Training centers for low-income youth may be closed
- More than one million fewer people get help finding a job

Since when is it the business of the federal government to provide job training for low-income youth or any youth? Since when is it the business of the federal government to help anyone find a job? It is the federal government's economic policies that create the need for federal job training and employment assistance. The federal government's minimum wage, business regulations, and economic interventions contribute to unemployment.

Parks and the Outdoors

- Reduced hours and services at national parks, refuges, and public lands
- 128 refuges to close or eliminate programs

Now, I like national parks as much as the average American does. But this doesn't mean that I don't think the federal government should lock up millions of acres of land. That being said, the federal government targeting parks and refuges is still pure evil. There are thousands of useless bureaucrats in many agencies and bureaus of the federal government that no American would ever miss. They could easily be given a furlough instead of park rangers.

Safety Net

- Unemployment benefits cut by up to 9.4 percent
- Four million fewer meals to seniors



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- \$160 million cut from state grants to help the disabled get work
- Cuts to Native American programs, including those aiding the neediest
- 300,000 women and children lose food aid
- Up to 30,000 kids lose child care services

Is it a proper function of government to provide a safety net? And even if it is, is the federal government authorized by the Constitution to provide a safety net? The answer is absolutely not. But let's face it; a safety net is just a polite term for welfare, which is just a polite term for income redistribution. The federal government has no business paying people not to work, feeding seniors, giving food aid to women and children, providing child care services, helping the disabled, or helping needy Native Americans.

Social Security

- 1,500 temporary Social Security Administration workers let go
- Loss through attrition of over 5,000 workers
- Delays for visitors at field offices and 800-number callers
- Two-week delays for initial disability claims decisions

The U.S. government is the nation's largest employer, with a workforce of roughly 2.7 million, and that is just civilians. What's not to like about the loss of 1,500 temporary workers and 5,000 other government parasites? The delays for visitors to field offices are always horrendous. I know this from experience when I tried to get a replacement Social Security card. Social Security is the largest annual expenditure of the federal government. It has trillions in unfunded liabilities. It is the first plank in the federal government's effort to create a class of citizenry that is dependent on the government. It does not have a real trust fund or lock box. It is not an insurance program. There is no contractual right to receive it. Its taxes are not actually invested. And as much as Republicans defend it, Social Security is both welfare and an inter-generational income transfer program that should be abolished.

Taxes

- Delays in getting answers to tax questions
- Fewer tax return reviews
- Reduced capacity to detect and prevent fraud
- Fewer counter-terrorism and anti-laundering investigations

The IRS is probably the most hated agency of the federal government. A reduced capacity to detect and prevent fraud and fewer tax return reviews means that Americans can keep more of their money in their pockets and out of the hands of Uncle Sam. If the tax code weren't so complex there would be fewer tax questions being asked. Congress should cut taxes *and* simplify the tax code. The main concern about money laundering is money from the illicit drug trade. But as mentioned earlier, there should be no war on drugs. No drug war, no huge profits; no huge profits, no money laundering.

Travel

- Increased wait times at airports
- Delays in visa processing by State Department



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- Reduced air traffic
- Delays and disruptions during summer travel

This might just make Americans the maddest. We already have to endure senseless delays and disruptions every time we use an airport — thanks to the thieves and perverts at the TSA and the government’s bogus “war on terror.” But what is the situation at airports but the federal government forcibly providing security for private companies? Imagine if the federal government stationed its security agents at the entrance to Wal-Mart, McDonalds, or Red Lobster. The thought of the federal government stationing its agents at airports should be just as ludicrous. Airline security should be truly privatized; that is, completely in the hands of the airports and airlines with no mandates or oversight by the TSA or any other government agency. Do not airline companies have a vested interested in keeping undesirables off a \$50 million airplane?

That the whole idea of the sequester is just a tragic joke can be seen in this recent development: Secretary of State [John Kerry](#) just announced that the United States will give Egypt \$250 million *more* in foreign aid. That would sure employ a lot of park rangers and food inspectors.



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