

Ohio Budget: Cuts "Sudden, Swift and Difficult"

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COLUMBUS, Ohio - It won't take long for Ohio to feel the effects of the state's recently approved two-year budget, according to some policy experts and community leaders.

The budget fills an \$8 billion deficit through cuts to just about every state service and program. Wendy Patton, senior associate with *Policy Matters Ohio*, predicts the impacts will be sudden, swift and very difficult.

"We're going to experience the effects of cuts in this state budget up close and personal, through our kids in their school days and in our neighborhoods and communities - as less cops on the beat, closed firehouses, unplowed streets."

Children in the classroom will be hit hardest, Patton says, as the \$56 billion budget slices nearly \$2 billion from education. That likely means increased class sizes, reduced staffing and the elimination of courses, says Barbara Shaner, associate executive director of the *Ohio Association of School Business Officials*, adding that the "cuts only" budget approach is hurting education.

"There really should be some look at other alternatives. It's an important investment that we make here in Ohio, and I hope that the public looks at what we're getting with the dollars that we spend on education."

Lawmakers missed an opportunity to correct tax policy and bring balance to the budget, Patton says.

"The budget, which is essentially the business plan for Ohio for the next two years, is based solely on cuts. In businesses, you don't look at just one side of the ledger. You look at both sides of the ledger."

Gov. John Kasich has argued that the cuts were critical, and the budget includes reforms that will save taxpayers money. Patton, however, claims the budget favors top earners and corporations, and opens or expands a dozen tax loopholes. She's calling for a fair approach that includes restoring revenues to previous years' levels.

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