

By Deborah Dawson, J.D., *shown at right*.

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Now we know we're going to be on the administration's naughty list, if and when they finally get it together. So, what could that mean for future County budgets? And what could the impact be on County services to residents?

I'm using the word "could" because I expect that it will take a year or two before we feel the full impacts of administration policies and whatever final form the Big Ugly Bill takes.



So, we're going to have to extrapolate from our current budget and service levels.

Federal aid represents \$37.5M (~14%) of the County's 2025 budget – and it appears that it's all subject to "suspension" or "termination" under EO 14287.

State aid represents \$54.6M (~20%) of our 2025 budget. Some of that funding could be cut as Albany struggles to deal with the fiscal impact of the Big Ugly Bill recently passed by the US House. As reported by the New York State Association of Counties, the bill as it currently stands would negatively impact the State's budget by billions of dollars, most notably in connection with the Medicaid and SNAP programs. According to NYSAC, the fiscal impact of the bill on NYS "could include an annual loss of \$13.5 billion in Federal Medicaid funds (\$10B) and new mandated state spending of \$3.4B. In addition, for the first time, the Federal government would require states to pay for a share of Federal nutrition programs costing NYS up to \$2.1B annually, with counties on the hook for a portion of these costs."

Based on experience, we can expect that Albany would cope with this level of negative fiscal impact by finding ways to "share the pain" with the counties. New York is already the only state that requires its counties to pick up a share of the costs for Medicaid recipients within their borders. Tompkins County already pays more than \$1M a month to the state for Medicaid, a program over which we have absolutely no control. Our Medicaid payments already comprise 23% of our tax levy. We can scarcely afford to pay more.

Our local nonprofit sector also faces crippling cuts to the Federal funding they depend on. Tompkins County's Human Services Coalition reports that 40% of our nonprofit "safety net" organizations rely on direct Federal funding totaling \$13.6M annually, and $\frac{3}{4}$ of them rely on indirect Federal funding totaling \$56.6M.

One popular local nonprofit dependent on Federal and State funding is TCAT. Because its Federal funding flows through the County, that funding is at risk under EO 14287. AND it has been directly threatened via an April 25th letter from the Secretary of Transportation. The letter indicates that TCAT's continued receipt of Federal transportation assistance will be conditioned on the elimination of "discriminatory" DEI programs AND on general cooperation with Federal authorities "in the enforcement of Federal law, including cooperating with and not impeding ICE and other Federal offices and components of DHS in the enforcement of immigration law." Federal transportation assistance represents over \$3 million – or ~15% - of TCAT's annual operating budget. (And that doesn't include the millions in Federal capital grants that enable it to buy much-needed new buses and make necessary capital improvements.) Another operating revenue stream under threat is State Transportation Operating Assistance or STOA, which represents about 30% of TCAT's annual operating budget. If NYS faces severe Federal funding cuts and chooses to cut STOA to make ends meet in Albany, the impact on TCAT's ability to provide service could be substantial.

The County and the local community simply don't have the capacity to make up for a possible 35% cut in Federal and state funding, especially as we all face the economic uncertainties created by the administration's vendetta against the university that is our major economic driver, the tariffs' impact on inflation and supply chains, and the general disintegration of the world order under Trump's "America First" foreign policy. So what would local government and nonprofit services look like in Trump's America?

Federal funding to Tompkins County government supports everything from Early Childhood Intervention services to programs administered by the County Office for the Aging – a cradle-to-grave spectrum of social, public health, and mental health services for our residents. The County's ability to provide these services is augmented by our "safety net" nonprofits, which administer programs like Meals on Wheels, food pantries, soup kitchens, low-income health clinics, Head Start, and a range of supportive, transitional, and reentry housing initiatives that serve thousands of our residents. For example, FoodNet's Meals on Wheels program prepares and delivers ~500 meals a day all around Tompkins County, and over 2,000 of our residents depend on Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers to make rent. Funding cuts to county government and our safety net nonprofits would necessarily mean deep cuts to all of these services. And cuts to TCAT service would mean that people who depend on public transit to get to work, to the doctor's office, and to the grocery store would be stranded.

Meanwhile, Albany estimates that between 1.5 and 2M New Yorkers could lose their current Medicaid or ACA health insurance coverage under the current version of the Big Ugly Bill. Almost 4700 Tompkins County residents are currently on Medicaid. We don't know how many more are on ACA health insurance. AND we don't yet know how many of these folks will lose their coverage. How will they pay for and receive health care?

And what impact will treating the uninsured have on the Cayuga Health System, the local nonprofit that owns our only local hospital and with which most of our local health care providers are affiliated? If Cayuga Health suffers, ALL of us in Tompkins County will suffer. It's worth noting that rural hospitals sometimes have to close when Medicaid and affordable health insurance programs are cut.

I could go on. But, by now, you get the picture. This administration, and the Big Ugly Bill it's pushing, are designed to create maximum fiscal stress for communities like ours – communities that don't bend the knee to the President's unconstitutional and unlawful priorities.

That stress would result in significant cuts to the services provided by local governments and nonprofits, cuts that would be felt most acutely by our poorest and most vulnerable populations.

They are the least able to speak up for themselves, so it will be up to us to speak for them – and for our children and grandchildren, who will have to live in the America that this administration is destroying. # #