

The State News

CASH IN QUICK

Getting by on a near-busted bank account? Use some creativity to pad your wallet

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THE STATE NEWS

Sinking shelter



MSU study finds Mich. communities are losing hundreds of millions of dollars a year in property tax revenues — a main source of funding for cities like E.L.

ILLUSTRATION BY HAILEY SCHALDACH | THE STATE NEWS

By Pat Evans
THE STATE NEWS

Individual homeowners aren't the only ones being hit by the slumping housing market. Cities across Michigan and the nation are struggling with property tax revenue losses, a problem that could lead to drastic funding cuts for everything from public safety to infrastructure repair.

Two separate studies conducted by MSU Extension and Michigan Municipal League, or MML, found that communities throughout Michigan will lose millions of dollars in property tax revenues over the next several years. Property tax revenues are the main source of income for most municipalities, accounting for up to half of a city's income.

If property tax revenues remain stagnant or decline, cities will have difficulty bal-

ancing their budgets, said Eric Scorsone, co-chairman of MSU Extension's State and Local Government Program.

"Cities are going to have trouble with large property tax losses," Scorsone said. "The revenue from property taxes are a main source of funding for, primarily, police and fire departments."

The revenue loss stems from housing values taking a dive when the economic climate

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By the numbers

45 percent of East Lansing's revenue last year came from property tax revenues

\$15 million in property tax revenue for East Lansing in 2008

\$33.5 million overall revenue for East Lansing in 2008

\$18 million budgeted for East Lansing police and fire departments in 2008, a majority of which came from property tax revenue

1,800 police officers laid off in Michigan since 2001 because of funding issues.

2,400 firefighters laid off since 2001

SOURCE: EAST LANSING ASSISTANT FINANCE DIRECTOR/TREASURER JILL MARTINEZ AND THE MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

STATE BUDGET

DESPITE STATE REVENUE DECLINE, FURTHER HIGHER ED CUTS UNLIKELY

By Allison Bush
THE STATE NEWS

Growing budget deficits could force state lawmakers to retool Michigan's proposed budget with additional cuts, but higher education funding likely won't see further cuts in addition to those included in Gov. Jennifer Granholm's February budget proposal.

"State revenues are falling at the rate of \$100 million a month below January's expectations. Those shortfalls are in addition to the state's existing budget deficit of \$1.6 billion.

"I know the state is going to go through a lot of difficulties. But when it comes to higher education, I believe that the levels maintained a year ago will be levels maintained this year," said state Rep. Vincent Gregory, D-Southfield, a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education.

Granholm could use a por-

"Certainly, we are not looking to walk away from any of those recommendations given that the revenues are coming in under projection."

Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Gov. Jennifer Granholm

tion of the up to \$2 billion in federal stimulus money going to Michigan to help make up the deficit, but she has not yet made this decision, Granholm's spokeswoman Liz Boyd said.

"You could use all of the discretionary recovery money, and you would still have to make budget cuts," Boyd said.

Bill Ballenger, editor and publisher of Inside Michigan Politics, said using the stimulus money would only be a one-time fix.

"If they do it, it's just going to put off hard decisions to downsize," Ballenger said. "We're going to end up having to make a terrible decision in a couple of years."

If Granholm decides to tap into the stimulus money, it could raise questions about her proposed tuition freeze, Ballenger said. It might be difficult

to reward stimulus money to universities that agree to freeze tuition while also using stimulus money to fix the deficit, he said.

"If she uses stimulus money, it's going to be a balancing act, and we're going to have to wait and see if they can make it happen," Ballenger said.

Gregory said he expects Granholm's offer to give a cut of stimulus funds to universities that freeze tuition will remain, although he said there might have to be discussions about limiting the number of universities that would be on the receiving end of funding.

Bob Emmer, director of the state budget, will meet with lawmakers Thursday

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DIVERSITY

Members of Chicano/Latino program create new group

By Jacob Carpenter
THE STATE NEWS

A majority of students and faculty in the Chicano/Latino Studies program have formed a group they say has a different mission than the original program director, whose job performance recently has come into question.

About 50 students and faculty have started The Real Chicano/Latino Studies, or RCLS, a group whose members oppose the future of the Chicano/Latino Studies program as outlined by its director, Sheila Contreras.

Contreras did not comment Monday when reached by phone.

RCLS is "an ideological function of how we believe the program should operate," said Ernesto Mireles, an American studies doctoral student.

The new group includes eight of the 10 Chicano/Latino Studies faculty members, eight of the 10 graduate students and about 30 of 45 undergraduates enrolled in the specialization, RCLS members said.

College of Social Science

Dean Marietta Baba is expected to assemble a task force by Friday that would review Contreras' job performance.

As part of RCLS, the students and faculty are revitalizing a mentorship program they said has been all but dormant since January.

The Chicano/Latino Fellows Program, which connects undergraduate students with graduate students who serve as mentors, was restarted Sunday after about four months of little activity.

Several students and faculty said Monday that the program became relatively inactive at the start of the year, when Contreras did not hire a new program coordinator.

"The mentorship program was built with the idea of becoming the tree of life for our program," said Javier Pescador, a history professor and Chicano/Latino Studies program faculty member. "For us, it's extremely important to have this

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SENTENCING

MSU football player gets 180 days in jail for fight

By Kyle Feldscher
THE STATE NEWS

Suspended MSU running back Glenn Winston must serve 180 days in jail for his



role in an off-campus brawl last October, a judge ruled Tuesday in East Lansing's 54-B District Court.

Winston, a freshman running back from Detroit, originally pleaded not guilty to three counts of aggravated assault stemming from an Oct. 10, 2008 fight that resulted in the hospitalization of MSU hockey player A.J. Sturges. Winston changed his plea on March 10 to guilty, and two of the aggravated assault charges were dropped while one count of assault and battery was added.

After Winston changed his plea to guilty, MSU head football coach Mark Dantonio suspended him from the team indefinitely. John Lewandowski, MSU's associate athletics director, said Tuesday no immediate changes were made to Winston's status as a member of the MSU football team following his sentencing.

Ingham County assistant prosecutor Lisa McCormick said Judge David Jordan handed down a "fair" sentence.

"In light of the egregious nature of some of the injuries, I think the judge was being fair," McCormick said.

In addition to the six-month jail sentence, Winston will serve two years of probation and pay \$1,768.43 in fines and court costs. Winston also is required to complete an assaultive behavior and substance abuse counseling program and must submit to random drug and alcohol tests.

After the fight, which took place outside a Center Street home, Sturges was treated for a fractured skull. Winston admitted to hitting Sturges, whose injuries prevented him from returning to the MSU hockey team for the 2008-09 season.

According to an East Lansing police report obtained by The State News through a Freedom of Information Act request, Winston also struck bystand-

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MUSHING FOR A CURE
An MSU professor is conducting research linking sled dogs to cures for obesity and diabetes, page 3A



Weather

Showers

High 49° | Low 38°

Three-day forecast, Page 2