



SEARCH BAR: SITE WEB [input] GO Web Search powered by YAHOO! SEARCH PLACE AN AD SUBSCRIBE TO THE PAPER

WHAT [input] WHERE [input] GO Get Yellow Advantage

FAIR 17° F Get more Lubbock weather

- NEWS SPORTS ENTERTAINMENT LIVING OPINION SPOTTED BLOGS OBITUARIES JOBS CARS HOMES RENTALS CLASSIFIEDS SERVICES

Home Local News

# Local News

## Estimate: Schools will get funding, just not as much as they may like

By Enrique Rangel | AUSTIN BUREAU Tuesday, January 13, 2009 Story last updated at 1/13/2009 - 1:34 am

AUSTIN - Texas Tech, West Texas A&M University, Amarillo College, South Plains College and just about every school, program or project in West Texas funded by the state will get its funding in the next biennium, but maybe not as much as they asked for.

That's how some members of the Texas Legislature and other Capitol watchers interpreted the revenue estimate for the next two years that State Comptroller Susan Combs released Monday, the day before the 140-day legislative session gets under way.

Combs said the state can expect to have \$77.1 billion available for general-purpose spending during the 2010-11 biennium, down \$9.1 billion, or 10.5 percent, compared to the current 2008-09 cycle.

"I am not surprised," Rep. John Smithee, R-Amarillo, said after Combs released her estimate.

"Anybody who has been reading the papers knew that this was coming," said Smithee, who has served in the Texas House since 1985. "One of the lessons that you learn when you've been here for a long time is that you've got to be very careful with the type of commitments you make, especially when money is tight like now."



Texas Tech, for example, needs research funding to become a Tier One university like the University of Texas and Texas A&M University, said Rep. Delwin Jones, R-Lubbock.

And though it is a strong possibility that Tech will get Tier One status, "it is not one that I would predict at this stage because we are talking about research money," said Jones, the dean of the Panhandle/South Plains legislative delegation. "Everybody is trying to get more money and the competition is tough."

Combs called her revenue estimate - which caps how much money the legislators can budget when they are in session - cautious.

"Given the continuing turmoil in the national economy, auto industry, housing and financial markets, this is a cautious forecast," she said at a packed news conference. "Our wisest course is to exercise prudence, just as Texas families are doing during the economic downturn."

Her Biennial Revenue Estimate includes a \$2.1 billion ending balance carried forward from the current 2008-09 biennium, plus an estimated \$76.7 billion in anticipated general purpose revenue from taxes and other sources.

The projection also takes into account a higher unemployment rate. The state is expected to lose about 111,000 non-farm jobs during the first nine months of this year

If there is any good news, Combs said, is that Texas is not hurting as much as other states.

In the housing market, for example, in Nevada, one of every 76 households went into foreclosure in November. In Florida it was one in every 173 and in California one in every 218 while in Texas it was one in every 1,176.

"The great news for Texas is that most people have confidence they will keep their homes and that is hugely important to them," Combs said.

Former Rep. Talmadge Heflin, R-Houston, who chaired the House Appropriations Committee in 2003 when the Legislature faced a \$10 billion shortfall, said that now that Combs has given her estimate of how much money the lawmakers will have, the Legislature should avoid the mistake it made in 2001 when it faced a similar situation. Eight years ago, the Legislature had a \$6 billion surplus and increased spending by 16 percent. Yet, two years later the lawmakers had the \$10 billion deficit.

Jobs Clovis Community College Front Desk Coordinator Management Trainees Looking Phlebotomist needed for D & S SEE ALL TOPJOBS Autos Real Estate MORE LUBBOCK CLASSIFIEDS

Search for jobs with YAHOO! hotjobs

## Featured Real Estate Agent

Jim Bevers Century 21 John Walton, REALTORS (806) 790-5884



HOTFACTS by YAHOO! hotjobs 2 in 3 workers expect no promotion this year. Advance your career at LubbockOnline.com

"The Texas Legislature needs to demonstrate leadership this year by pruning state spending now," said Heflin, who is now the director of the Center for Fiscal Policy at the Texas Public Policy Foundation, an Austin think-tank.

Because the state is expected to have a Rainy Day Fund estimated at \$9.1 billion, "already, there are some calls by some groups to expand entitlement programs and raise taxes," Heflin said.

But Dick Lavine, senior policy analyst at the Center for Public Policy Priorities, an Austin think-tank that advocates government programs for needy Texans, said he hopes the lawmakers don't use Combs' revenue estimate to cut funding for basic public services like education and health care.

"One of the concerns we have is that the Legislature will be tempted to make cuts on social programs that will leave some people unprotected, like cuts to Medicaid or to (the Children's Health Insurance Program) CHIP," Lavine said.

Sen. Robert Duncan, R-Lubbock, who predicted last week that the budget would be the main issue in the upcoming session, said that although these are tough times, he is not pessimistic.

"These cycles happen," said Duncan, who sits on the Senate Finance Committee and is a member of the Legislative Budget Board, the bi-cameral panel that recommends to the Legislature and to the governor how to spend the state money.

"(But) we are going to be able to meet critical needs," Duncan said. "Public education and higher ed have always been important to our area and we are going to be able to meet our critical needs."

If anything, Duncan stressed, the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislature will be a disciplined session.

"Everybody is going to have to determine what their priorities are," he said "We've got to be able to provide."

To comment on this story:

[enrique.rangel@morris.com](mailto:enrique.rangel@morris.com) | (512) 673-7553

[walt.nett@lubbockonline.com](mailto:walt.nett@lubbockonline.com) | 766-8706

### Reader Comments

There are no comments. Be the first to post one.

You can comment by [logging in](#).

#### Sponsored Links

[E-Special - Hotel in Lubbock](#)  
[www.lubbockqualityinn.com](http://www.lubbockqualityinn.com)

[Lubbock IP Law](#)  
[www.ChrisStewartLaw.com](http://www.ChrisStewartLaw.com)

Ads by Yahoo!

CONTACT US

806-762-8844

[Need More Help?](#)

This site, and all its content © 2009 The Lubbock Avalanche-Journal | The Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Email Addresses](#) | [Need Help with LubbockOnline](#)  
[Advertise with Us](#) | [Local Business Listings](#)