

Are Spending Cuts Here To Stay?

BY PHILIP ELLIOTT
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The spending cuts are here to stay if you believe the public posturing Sunday.

The Senate's Republican leader Mitch McConnell called them modest. House Speaker John Boehner isn't sure the cuts will hurt the economy. The White House's top economic adviser, Gene Sperling, said the pain isn't that bad right now.

So after months of dire warnings, Washington didn't implode, government didn't shut down and the \$85 billion budget trigger didn't spell doom. And no one has yet crafted a politically viable way to roll back those cuts.

"This modest reduction of 2.4 percent in spending over the next six months is a little more than the average American experienced just two months ago, when their own pay went down when the payroll tax holiday expired," McConnell said.

"I don't know whether it's going to hurt the economy or not," Boehner said. "I don't think anyone quite understands how the sequester is really going to work."

And Sperling, making the

rounds on the Sunday news shows, added: "On Day One, it will not be as harmful as it will be over time."

Both parties cast blame on the other for the automatic, across-the-board spending cuts but gave little guidance on what to expect in the coming weeks. Republicans and Democrats pledged to retroactively undo the cuts but signaled no hints as to how that process would start to take shape. Republicans insisted there would be no new taxes and Democrats refused to talk about any bargain without them.

"That's not going to work," said Sen. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H. "If we're going to increase revenue again, it's got to go to the debt with real entitlement reform and real tax reform when you actually lower rates. ... I'm not going to agree to any more tax increases that are going to go to increase more government."

Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., said any tax increases were unacceptable.

"I'm not going to do any more small deals. I'm not going to raise taxes to fix sequestration. We don't need to raise taxes to fund the government," Graham said.

All of this comes ahead of a new, March 27 deadline that

could spell a government shutdown and a debt-ceiling clash coming in May.

Boehner said his chamber would move this week to pass a measure to keep government open through Sept. 30. McConnell said a government shutdown was unlikely to come from his side of Capitol Hill. The White House said it would dodge the shutdown and roll back the cuts, which hit domestic and defense spending in equal share.

"We will still be committed to trying to find Republicans and Democrats that will work on a bi-partisan compromise to get rid of the sequester," Sperling said.

Senate Democrats and Senate Republicans last week put forward alternatives that would have avoided the cuts, but each side voted down the others' proposals. The House Democrats proposed an alternative but the House Republicans did not let them vote on it.

House Republicans twice passed alternatives last year.

Obama has phoned lawmakers but it isn't clear to what end; the White House refused Sunday to release the names of lawmakers Obama phoned. Boehner and McConnell said they had a productive meeting with Obama on

Friday, but it didn't yield a deal.

"Well, no one can think that that's been a success for the president," said Mitt Romney, Obama's unsuccessful rival in November's election. "He didn't think the sequester would happen. It is happening."

Obama and the Republicans have been fighting over federal spending since the opposition party regained control of the House of Representatives in the 2010 midterm elections. The budget cuts were designed in 2011 to be so ruthless that both sides would be forced to find a better deal, but they haven't despite two years to find a compromise.

The \$85 billion in cuts apply to the remainder of the 2013 fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. But without a deal they will continue slashing government spending by about \$1 trillion more over a 10-year period.

McConnell spoke to CNN's "State of the Union." Boehner was interviewed on NBC's "Meet the Press." Sperling appeared on ABC's "This Week," NBC and CNN. Ayotte appeared on ABC. Graham spoke with CBS' "Face the Nation." Romney was a guest on "Fox News Sunday."

Baby Born With HIV Apparently Cured

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD
AP Medical Writer

WASHINGTON — A baby born with the virus that causes AIDS appears to have been cured, scientists announced Sunday, describing the case of a child from Mississippi who's now 2 1/2 and has been off medication for about a year with no signs of infection.

There's no guarantee the child will remain healthy, although sophisticated testing uncovered just traces of the virus' genetic material still lingering. If so, it would mark only the world's second reported cure.

Specialists say Sunday's announcement, at a major AIDS meeting in Atlanta, offers promising clues for efforts to eliminate HIV infection in children, especially in AIDS-plagued African countries where too many babies are born with the virus.

"You could call this about as close to a cure, if not a cure, that we've seen," Dr. Anthony Fauci of the National Institutes of Health, who is familiar with the findings, told The Associated Press.

A doctor gave this baby faster and stronger treatment than is usual, starting a three-drug infusion within 30 hours of birth. That was before tests confirmed the infant was infected and not just at risk from a mother whose HIV wasn't diagnosed until she was in labor.

"I just felt like this baby was at higher-than-normal risk, and deserved our best shot," Dr. Hannah Gay, a pediatric HIV specialist at the University of Mississippi, said in an interview.

That fast action apparently knocked out HIV in the baby's blood before it could form hide-outs in the body. Those so-called reservoirs of dormant cells usually rapidly reinfest anyone who stops medication, said Dr. Deborah Persaud of Johns Hopkins Children's Center. She led the investigation that deemed the child "functionally cured," meaning in long-term remission even if all traces of the virus haven't been completely eradicated.

Next, Persaud's team is planning a study to try to prove that, with more aggressive treatment of other high-risk babies. "Maybe we'll be able to block this reservoir seeding," Persaud said.

No one should stop anti-AIDS drugs as a result of this case, Fauci cautioned.

But "it opens up a lot of doors" to research if other children can be helped, he said. "It makes perfect sense what happened."

Better than treatment is to prevent babies from being born with HIV in the first place.

About 300,000 children were born with HIV in 2011, mostly in poor countries where only about 60 percent of infected pregnant women get treatment that can keep them from passing the virus to their babies. In the U.S., such births are very rare because HIV testing and treatment long have been part of prenatal care.

"We can't promise to cure babies who are infected. We can promise to prevent the vast majority of transmissions if the moms are tested during every pregnancy," Gay stressed.

LAST RESPECTS TO A LEGEND



RON T. ENNIS/FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM/MCT
A visitor pays tribute to Van Cliburn in the sanctuary at Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, on Saturday. The internationally acclaimed musician died Wednesday at 78.

Egypt's Army Intervenes In Port Said Clashes

BY MOSSAAD EL-GOHARY AND
SARAH EL DEEB
Associated Press

PORT SAID, Egypt — The military intervened in clashes between thousands of protesters and police in a restive Egyptian canal city on Sunday, the latest in a cycle of violence that killed two security members and two civilians, and which continues to rock Egypt two years after the uprising that ousted long-time ruler Hosni Mubarak.

Also on Sunday, a court ruled that Mubarak will face a new trial next month on charges related to the killings of hundreds of protesters during the revolution that forced him from power.

Around 5,000 protesters threw rocks and firebombs at police in Port Said late Sunday, the scene of a civil strike now in its second week. Riot police responded with tear gas and bird shot in street battles that lasted for hours.

The battle outside the police and government buildings started early Sunday and continued until past midnight. At one point, Egyptian soldiers intervened by forming a line between the two sides, as protesters climbed the tanks chanting support for the country's armed forces that, unlike the police, have not cracked down on rioters in the city. "The people and the army are one hand!" the demonstrators shouted, urging the soldiers to side with them.

Late on Sunday, the military spokesman denied that soldiers were firing at the police in a short statement indicating the tense situation.

"The armed forces personnel are on the scene to protect the government building and to separate the protesters and the interior ministry force," military spokesman Ahmed Mohammed Ali said in a statement posted on his official Facebook page.

Health official Helmy el-Afani said 325 people were injured in the clashes. Most suffered tear gas inhalation while others were wounded by bird shot. The Interior Ministry said one policeman was killed by gunfire, and one soldier and at least 10 policemen were wounded. A medical official in Port Said later said one of the policemen died of his gunshot wounds and two civilians were killed but the cause of their deaths was not immediately clear. He was speak-

ing on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

Many residents of Port Said are demanding retribution for what they claim was excessive police force that led to the deaths of more than 40 civilians in late January. Most were killed during what the security forces said was an attempt by some to storm a prison there.

The embattled Interior Ministry, which oversees Egypt's police force, was unable to contain the anger in the city at the time and the president leaned on the military to protect key installations and buildings. Sunday was the first time the army intervened between police and protesters in Port Said since the military was put in charge of securing the city in late January. The police had all but disappeared since.

Protests swept the city Jan. 26 after a Cairo court issued death sentences against 21 people, most from Port Said, for their part in Egypt's deadliest soccer riot in February 2012.

The latest street battles broke out when word emerged that 39 defendants in the case had been transferred to prisons outside the city. A police official, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to discuss the case, said the transfer was necessary to ensure calm before a March 9 court hearing that is expected to issue new verdicts for police officers and other Port Said defendants also charged in connection with the soccer incident.

In Cairo, die-hard soccer fans of the Al-Ahly club, known as the Ultras, are also gearing up for the March 9 verdict. They staged protests around the capital on Sunday that blocked traffic going to the airport, and closed off an area around the central bank.

Most of those killed in the Port Said stadium were Al-Ahly Ultras fans, and the group is pressing for retribution from Port Said soccer fans as well as security officials.

In Cairo, police briefly cleared protesters from Tahrir Square — once the epicenter of protests against Mubarak. The demonstrators, who have held a sit-in there for the past three months, returned soon after, burning two police vehicles near the famed Egyptian Museum. By nightfall, a handful of protesters and riot police

continued to clash along a major street near the square.

Amid the tension, President Mohammed Morsi met with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry in Cairo for more than two hours on Sunday, a day after the top American diplomat met six opposition figures out of 11 who were invited. The other five declined to meet Kerry because of Washington's insistence that all Egyptians take part in next month's elections.

Morsi and his government argue that parliamentary elections will help put the country on the right track, enabling him and the legislature to tackle a deteriorating economy.

But the opposition argues that elections are likely to inflame the already tense atmosphere and have called for a boycott of the vote. The mostly liberal and secular opposition accuses the Islamist president of failing to seek consensus over critical issues, such as the drafting of the constitution and the elections law.

Queen Elizabeth II Hospitalized In London

LONDON (AP) — Britain's Queen Elizabeth II was hospitalized Sunday over an apparent stomach infection that has ailed her for days, a rare instance of ill health sidelining the long-reigning monarch. Elizabeth will have to cancel a visit to Rome and other engagements as she recovers, and outside experts said she may have to be rehydrated intravenously.

Buckingham Palace said the 86-year-old queen had experienced symptoms of gastroenteritis and was being examined at London's King Edward VII Hospital — the first time in a decade that Elizabeth has been hospitalized.

"As a precaution, all official engagements for this week will regrettably be either postponed or cancelled," the palace said in a statement. Elizabeth's two-day trip to Rome had been planned to start Wednesday. A spokeswoman said the trip may be "reinstated" at a later date.

The symptoms of gastroenteritis — vomiting and diarrhea — usually pass after one or two days, although they can be more severe in older or otherwise vulnerable people. Dehydration is a common complication.

The illness was first announced Friday, and Elizabeth had to cancel a visit Swansea, Wales, on Saturday to present leeks — a national symbol — to soldiers of the Royal Welsh Regiment in honor of Wales' national day, St. David's Day. She instead spent the day trying to recover at Windsor Castle, but appears to have had trouble kicking the bug.

Baby Delivered Alive Following Car Crash

NEW YORK (AP) — A pregnant young woman who was feeling ill was headed to the hospital with her husband early Sunday when the car they were riding in was hit, killing them both, but their baby boy was born prematurely and survived, authorities and a relative said.

The driver of a BMW slammed into the car carrying Nachman and Raizy Glauber, both 21, at an intersection in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, said Isaac Abraham, a neighbor of Raizy Glauber's parents who lives two blocks from the scene of the crash.

Raizy Glauber was thrown from the car and her body landed under a parked tractor-trailer, said witnesses who came to the scene after the crash. Nachman Glauber was pinned in the car, and emergency workers had to cut off the roof to get him out, witnesses said.

Both of the Glaubers were pronounced dead at hospitals, police said, and both died of blunt-force trauma, the medical examiner said.

Their infant son was in serious condition, said Abraham. The hospital did not return calls about the child. The Glaubers' driver was in stable condition, police said. Both the driver of the BMW and a passenger fled and were being sought, police said.

Syrian Cheif Visits Aleppo Rebel-Held Areas

BEIRUT (AP) — Following rebel gains, the leader of the Syrian opposition made his first visit Sunday to areas near the embattled northern city of Aleppo as fighters trying to oust President Bashar Assad captured a police academy and a border crossing along the frontier with Iraq.

Assad, meanwhile, lashed out at the West for helping his opponents in the civil war, delivering a blistering rebuke to Secretary of State John Kerry's announcement that the U.S. will for the first time provide medical supplies and other non-lethal aid directly to the rebels in addition to \$60 million in assistance to Syria's political opposition.

Aleppo, the nation's largest city, has been a major front in the nearly 2-year-old uprising. Government forces and rebels have been locked in a stalemate there since July.

Mouaz al-Khatib met Sunday with Syrians in the two rebel-held Aleppo suburbs of Manbah and Jarablus, a statement said. The stated goal of his trip — his first since being named the leader of the Syrian National Coalition late last year — was to inspect living conditions.

But his foray to the edge of Aleppo also could be an attempt to boost his group's standing among civilians and fighters on the ground, many of whom see the Western-backed political leadership in exile as irrelevant and out of touch.



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