

# CITY LIMITS

## DOOMSDAY MAYORAL BUDGET STEPS CLOSER TO REALITY

**Bloomberg's final fiscal plan looks a lot like the "doomsday" preliminary budget he issued in January.**

[Neil deMause](#)

The big headline from Mayor Bloomberg's [announcement yesterday of his final city budget plan](#) was that 6,414 city school jobs would be eliminated in response to an anticipated \$493 million in reduced state education funding to New York City. But buried in the [4,024-page budget](#) itself are dozens more cuts that would affect scores of city services, from libraries to summer youth jobs.

In all, Bloomberg's final fiscal plan looks a lot like the "doomsday" [preliminary budget](#) he issued in January, after Governor Paterson announced his own round of cuts to close what's now a \$9.2 billion state budget deficit.

Considering Bloomberg's recent indication that his final budget plan would be significantly more austere than his preliminary one, city services could have fared far worse, said Independent Budget Office chief of staff Doug Turetsky. "If you go back a month ago, the mayor was asking for 7.2% additional cuts for city agencies for 2011," Turetsky said. "Basically, none of that materialized. Basically it's the January plan, with about \$200 million more in actions to reduce spending or raise revenue."

At least one city service fares better in the mayor's final budget plan than in his preliminary budget. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) providing food aid to the city's soup kitchens and food pantries, which faced [total elimination](#) in the mayor's preliminary budget, is now restored.

But the restoration occurred at the \$10.2 million figure that the mayor put forward last year, not the \$12 million ultimately approved by the city council. Joel Berg of the New York City Coalition Against Hunger hopes the city council will provide EFAP the additional \$1.8 million. Given that pantry and kitchen use rose 21 percent in the past year, Berg said, the mayor's proposed 14 percent reduction of to EFAP's budget "demonstrates severely misplaced priorities."

Another city service still facing cuts in the final budget plan is job programs. Summer youth jobs programs – which were zeroed-out in the mayor's preliminary budget -- will have \$1 million in city funds restored, but could still lose \$42.5 million in already-expected cuts from the state and from the now-expired federal stimulus package.

In addition, the much-lauded Parks Opportunity Program, which provides transitional jobs in the Parks Department for people receiving public assistance, will be cut by about 700 of its 2,300 positions.

Some city services targeted for cuts in the mayor's preliminary budget face even deeper cuts in his final budget plan. Fifty senior centers would now be closed, up from 15.

The mayor's final budget plan also puts on the chopping block some services not previously targeted for cuts. Adult literacy programs would lose their entire \$4.6 million budget line under the mayor's final plan – something that the mayor himself noted in his [litany of budget woes](#) yesterday, adding, "and as you know, in this day and age, not having a diploma and not having a GED really limits your employment opportunities."

As for the school cuts, much remains unclear, including exactly who will be laid off, and when such decisions will be made. (Bloomberg said yesterday that "there is no one drop dead date" for finalizing the layoffs, though he hoped to have a final decision well before the new school year starts in September.)

Schools chancellor Joel Klein yesterday [reiterated his call](#) to allow teachers to be laid off based on performance rather than seniority; the United Federation of Teachers has steadfastly opposed such a move.

And while individual teachers may face the ax based on their rookie status, whether school kids lose, for example, art classes or classroom aides will depend on their principals, who under Bloomberg have ultimate control over the spending, if not the size, of their school's budgets.

One certainty is larger class sizes. "Principals have already been told to prepare for class sizes of 32 in grades 1st through 5th, which is unprecedented," says Leonie Haimson of the parent advocacy group [Class Size Matters](#), citing a DoE memo to principals that was printed in the April 26 Principal's Weekly.

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