

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/vera-briefs-administration-on-sequesters-potential-impact-on-public-safety-and-justice>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Over the past several months Washington, DC has been abuzz over potential automatic spending cuts known as sequestration. What would these cuts mean for public safety and the justice sector? This was the subject of a recent meeting convened by the White House Office of Public Engagement on Thursday, February 21 that brought together 24 representatives from state and local government, law enforcement, and justice policy organizations. Administration officials at the meeting included representatives from the White House Office of Public Engagement, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Justices Acting Assistant Attorney General for the Office of Justice Programs.

Dan Wilhelm, Vice President and Chief Program Officer at Vera, moderated the dialogue in which participants relayed concerns about the impact the sequester could have on law enforcement and public safety funds for crime prevention and prosecution, as well as on research and the best evidence-based practices for innovative, effective programs. (Read what criminal justice practitioners around the country said will be the impact of federal budget cuts on public safety, in a summer 2012 [survey by Vera and the National Criminal Justice Association](#).)

Earlier last week, I attended an event at the White House along with representatives from other sectors impacted by non-defense discretionary spending, including public health, labor, and education. In his remarks, the President, flanked by first responders, urged Congress to take action to avoid the sequester and to work together on a plan for balanced deficit reduction.

At this point, a deal between Congress and the President seems unlikely and spending cuts will go into effect Friday, March 1. Over \$1.6 billion will be cut from the Department of Justices current fiscal year 2013 funding level, with \$107 million expected to be cut from the Office of Justice Programs. These cuts will entail furloughs to federal law enforcement officers and department staff, which will have grave consequences on the Departments ability to administer justice across the country. The cuts will also have a significant effect on federal grant money that helps spur innovative criminal justice reform programs to enhance safety even as they reduce cost.

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