

## [Democratic-Controlled Legislatures Overseeing 17 of the 20 Highest State Budget Deficits Nationwide](#)

By [Eric Ostermeier](#) on March 3, 2009



How are states going to balance the budget deficits that are mounting across the nation?

For that answer, you'll have to ask the Democrats - as they control both the Senate and House in 17 of the top 20 states with the largest FY 2010 per capita deficits.

The National Conference of State Legislatures recently issued state level budget deficit data.

***A Smart Politics analysis finds Democrats are in charge of 35 of the 40 chambers in states with the 20 largest deficits, including control of both the Senate and House in 17 of these 20 states.***

Only Arizona (ranked #9) and Kansas (#15) have legislatures entirely under control of the GOP in the states facing the biggest budget crises nationwide. In Virginia (#20), control is split, with Democrats in charge of the Senate and Republicans with the partisan advantage in the House.

Democrats, meanwhile, control both chambers in the other 17 states: Hawaii, New York, Connecticut, California, New Jersey, Delaware, Washington, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Louisiana, Wisconsin, Rhode Island, Nevada, Vermont, Maryland, Maine, and Iowa. (Note: while Democrats currently control a majority of state legislatures (27), they still preside over a vastly disproportionate number of states in the deepest financial trouble).

Of course, budget decisions made prior to the 2008 elections helped to shape the current fiscal crises that states are now facing - and will face in FY 2010.

***But a Smart Politics analysis of party control of these 20 state legislatures prior to the 2008 elections still finds that Democratic Party-run legislatures dominated the list of the highest per capita budget deficit offenders:***

- Democrats controlled 13 legislatures prior to the 2008 elections, compared to just 2 for the GOP (Arizona and Kansas), with control split in the other 5 states (New York, Delaware, Wisconsin, Nevada, and Virginia).
- Democrats held 61 percent of the Senate seats in these states, compared to just 39 percent for Republicans.
- Democrats held 62 percent of the House seats in these states, while Republicans held only 37 percent, with 1 percent held by third parties.
- Democrats also controlled the governor's office in 60 percent of these states (12 of 20).

***While the economic downturn is creating shortfalls in the budgets of nearly all states nationwide, it is also highlighting those states that placed themselves in the most precarious positions due to their previous legislative spending and revenue decisions. In short, if the books in these 20 states were dusted for fingerprints in an investigation of the legislative decision-making that contributed to these budget shortfalls, they would no doubt find the lion's share belonging to Democrats.***

It is also interesting to note that all but three of these states facing the biggest budget crises across the nation also voted for Barack Obama in 2008. Only Arizona, Louisiana, and Kansas voted Republican in the presidential race.

### **Legislative Partisan Control in States with the Largest FY 2010 Per Capita Budget Deficits**

Rank	State	Deficit per capita	Pre-election Control	Post-election control
1	Hawaii	\$ 788.56	Democratic	Democratic
2	New York	\$ 703.47	Split	Democratic
3	Connecticut	\$ 697.50	Democratic	Democratic
4	California	\$ 651.19	Democratic	Democratic
5	New Jersey	\$ 554.43	Democratic	Democratic
6	Delaware	\$ 511.11	Split	Democratic
7	Washington	\$ 485.68	Democratic	Democratic
8	Minnesota	\$ 479.65	Democratic	Democratic
9	Arizona	\$ 452.96	GOP	GOP
10	Massachusetts	\$ 451.17	Democratic	Democratic
11	Louisiana	\$ 437.92	Democratic	Democratic
12	Wisconsin	\$ 436.50	Split	Democratic
13	Rhode Island	\$ 411.95	Democratic	Democratic
14	Nevada	\$ 396.72	Split	Democratic
15	Kansas	\$ 395.66	GOP	GOP
16	Vermont	\$ 334.09	Democratic	Democratic
17	Maryland	\$ 317.36	Democratic	Democratic
18	Maine	\$ 303.51	Democratic	Democratic
19	Iowa	\$ 258.81	Democratic	Democratic
20	Virginia	\$ 244.46	Split	Split

Note: Data compiled by Smart Politics.