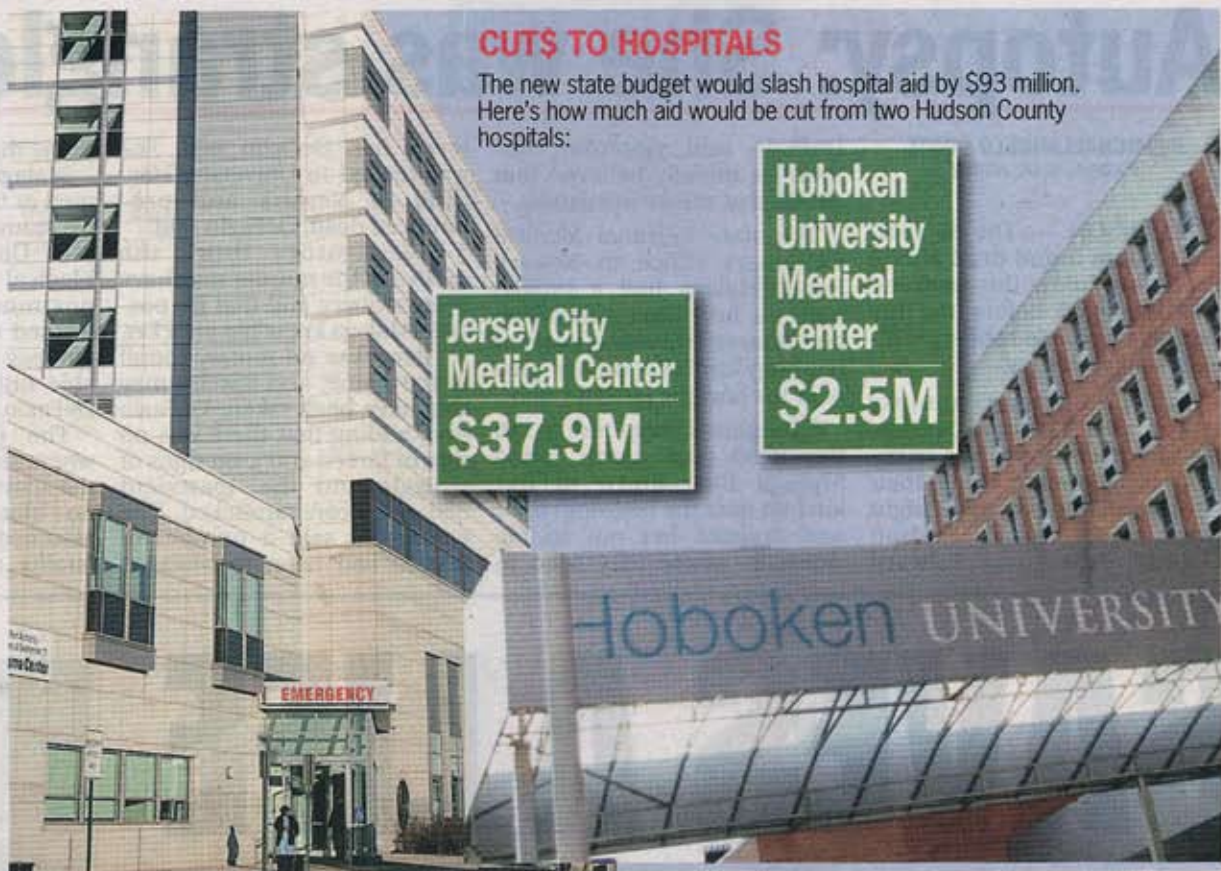


**CUTS TO HOSPITALS**

The new state budget would slash hospital aid by \$93 million. Here's how much aid would be cut from two Hudson County hospitals:

Jersey City  
Medical Center  
**\$37.9M**

Hoboken  
University  
Medical  
Center  
**\$2.5M**



# Hospital cuts trimmed, bites still to be sharp

By **PAUL KOEPP**  
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

The state budget deal reached Monday by Gov. Jon Corzine and legislators will slash aid given to hospitals across the state for dealing with low-income patients by about \$93 million.

That cut is \$50 million smaller than originally proposed by Corzine, but area hospitals say they will still feel the crunch.

According to an analysis by the New Jersey Hospital Association, the two hardest hit Hudson County hospitals are the Jersey City Medical Center and Hoboken University Medical Center.

JCMC would see its charity care reduced from \$83.5 million in the 2008 fiscal year to \$45.6 million in 2009, while aid for HUMC would be cut from \$16.4 million to \$13.9 million.

About 60 percent of JCMC's patients require charity care or Medicaid.

The numbers will not be final until the state Senate and Assembly budget committees approve the budget and it is passed by both houses, which is expected by early next week.

By law, the state must adopt its budget before the end of the month.

John McKeegan, a spokesman for LibertyHealth Systems Inc., which operates JCMC — as well as Meadowlands Hospital Medical Center in Secaucus and recently closed Greenville Hospital in Jersey City — said it's too soon to say what the impact will be on the hospital.

LHS President Joseph F. Scott said last month that the state's cuts could threaten the jobs of 600 employees, about 20 percent of the company's work force, along with some services.

However, JCMC should be helped by a new \$44 million "hospital stabilization fund" for the state's neediest hospitals, accord-

ing to Assemblywoman Joan Quigley, a spokeswoman for Hoboken University Medical Center who also sits on the Assembly budget committee.

The fund is set to be created through special legislation later this week.

Quigley also said HUMC won approval last week from the state Local Finance Board to refinance \$52 million in bonds.

That will help the hospital absorb its \$2.5 million charity care cut, she said. In addition, updated numbers from 2007 show an increase in low-income patients at HUMC, which boosts its share of subsidies under the state formula, Quigley said.

"It still means we have to tighten our belts, like every other hospital in the state," she said.

She added that legislators rejected Corzine's suggestion to make Medicaid patients responsible for co-payments of up to \$5 on prescriptions and emergency care.