

**dailynews.com**

## Soaring food, gas prices taking their toll

**Climbing cost of living leaves many pinching their pennies, struggling to cover basics**

By Julia M. Scott, Staff Writer

Article Last Updated: 06/01/2008 12:28:04 AM PDT

Aaargh. Groan. Sigh.

Skyrocketing prices for everything from gas, utilities and food to tuition, trash pickup and health insurance have left many Angelenos frustrated, outraged and downright fed up.

And even if you can still afford a \$3 latte, today's economic pressures can seem overwhelming.

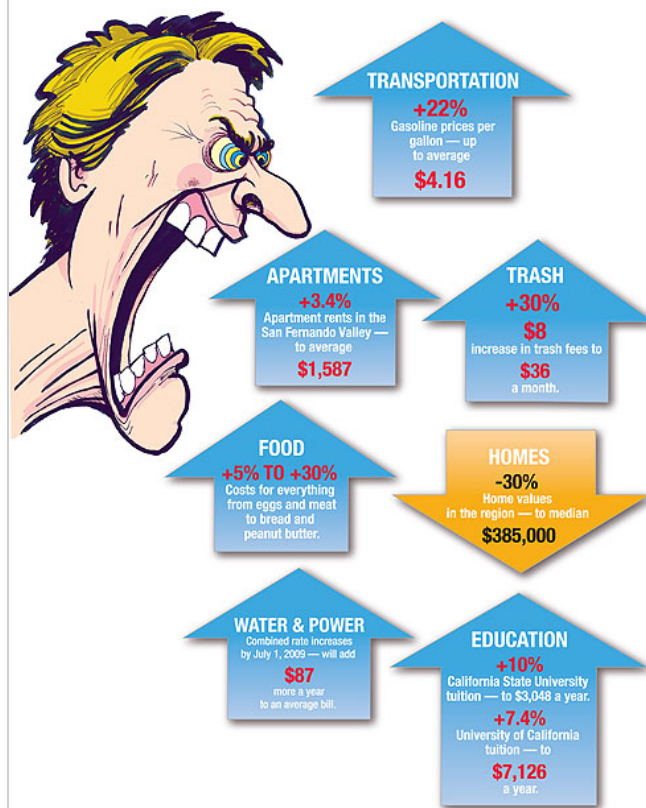
"The prices all across the board went up quickly at the same time, and that's sort of a slap across the face," said Neal Frankle, who manages \$95million in investments at Wealth Resources Group in Woodland Hills.

His clients, middle-class working families and retirees, are making ends meet but rethinking discretionary spending, such as for vacations, dining out or the latest handbag.

The immediate forecast, according to financial experts, is dismal.

While economists debate whether the nation is technically in a recession, it feels like one to many consumers. The price of gasoline, which

## ENOUGH ALREADY!



some expect will hit \$5 a gallon before long, is pushing up the price of oil-based products, from tennis shoes to plastics, and adding to shipping costs for just about everything.

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStital® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



So, is there an end in sight?

"It's a tough time for a lot of people," said Jack

**ENOUGH ALREADY!:**

[Soaring food, gas prices taking their toll](#)

[Business looks for ways to cope with rising fuel prices](#)

[Retailers yet to see sales bump from stimulus checks](#)

[How are you coping? Share your stories and tips!](#)

**EDITORIAL:** [The Age of Austerity](#)

**WHERE TO GET HELP:**

[The Bargain Hunter](#)

[AAA Gas Calculator](#)

[GasBuddy.com](#)

[LADWP consumer rebates](#)

[Calif. Dept. of Consumer Affairs](#)

struggle for Roberta Bates, a 39-year-old unemployed notary.

"It's not a recession, it's a depression," Bates said as she left the 99-Cents Only Store on Sherman Way in Canoga Park recently.

Bates' fridge is empty because she does not have the money for groceries. When she explained her situation to a bill collector, the woman offered her own e-mail address so they could stay in touch in case Bates needs help later.

"I told her I don't have any money," Bates said. "The money I get is for rent."

Bates' friend and shopping buddy, Araceli Garcia, had an equally



Pocketbook Pinch: Dozens of rising fees and costs are taking a toll on consumers.

Kyser, chief economist of the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corp. "Maybe late 2008 will feel a little bit better."

But holding out for even a few months will be a

dreary outlook. A 32-year-old housewife with

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



three children, Garcia is looking for work.

"I have to get anything," said Garcia, who shook her head as she talked about finding a job. "I'm willing to do telemarketing."

The two women have changed their habits to live more cheaply. They carpool when running errands and cook together instead of eating out. Garcia even talks about moving to a country with a lower cost of living.

The two have found peace of mind in their faith, attending Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses in Canoga Park.

"Otherwise, I think I would be living in my car with my three kids," Garcia said.

Tony Frazier is another area resident whose frustration about everything from prices to politics quickly bubbles to the surface.

Frazier, 30, a school cafeteria worker from Canoga Park, recently traded in his Chevrolet Monte Carlo with a gas-guzzling V8 engine for a fuel-efficient Toyota Corolla.

It's not as zippy, but his gas bill shrank from \$120 to \$60 a tank.

And Frazier and his friend Natalie Illouz, 23, a kindergarten teacher from Reseda, are teaming up to save money.

Recently, they stocked up on groceries at Valu Plus Food Warehouse in Canoga Park, which they

believe is cheaper than chain supermarkets. Instead of going out, they planned to cook chicken and corn bread and watch a Lakers game on TV.

When they feel cooped up, they go play 18 holes of miniature golf at Sherman



Where to get help...

Oaks Castle Park, where a round is \$6.50.

Frazier says he is struggling more now than during the dot-com bust of 2000 and during past recessions.

"It wasn't as hard to get by then," he said.

Susan Johnston of Woodland Hills has used meditation to come to terms with financial stress.

Adding to the stress is the money she owes relatives in a probate case - a situation that may force her to sell her home unless she can get a loan in a tight credit market.

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.  
PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™



"Either there is going to be a miracle loan officer," said Johnston while waiting outside Ross Dress for Less in Tarzana recently for a ride, "or my life is going to take on a whole new direction."

Advertisement



A bright idea in online advertising.

PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics.



FormatDynamics®

The advertisement banner features a lightbulb icon on the left, the text "A bright idea in online advertising." in orange, "PrinterStitial® ads by Format Dynamics." in black, and the Format Dynamics logo on the right. The logo consists of a stylized orange 'F' and a grey 'D'.

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™