Contemporary accounts of criminal justice discourse in the U.S. often highlight the increasing punitiveness in political and public discourse since the late 1970s. Recent developments, however, point to a swing-back in the punitive pendulum, due to the current financial crisis. In this project, I identify these developments as an emerging discourse of resource scarcity, which I call "humonetarianism". More than a mere additional consideration, the discourse of scarcity permeates all aspects of the criminal process, from decriminalization, through alternative punishments, prison restructuring, and a narrowing of the parole web. All these examples share several common elements: an emergency discourse, characterized by short-term solutions; an unwillingness to engage in deep discussions; political bipartisanism; and, more flexibility around the boundaries of the "sayable", in a way that allows politicians to sound "soft on crime". While humonetarian discourse may seem to be a reversal of the political "tough on crime" stance, and a welcome (to some) step away from public punitiveness and mass incarceration, it is, in fact, firmly rooted in the actuarial/managerial paradigm of U.S. correctional policy. The project identifies the potential of cost-driven discourse to reverse punitive policies, and also draws attention to some serious problems associated with this paradigm - mainly, its shortsightedness and its dehumanizing aspects.