



The Care Giver Extra JULY 2009

United Domestic Workers of America www.udwa.org

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THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT



I'm sure many of you recall the famous quote from Charles Dickens: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times."

That is very much how I feel today as we continue our fight in Sacramento to preserve the IHSS program and protect our members and the people we serve.

As you know, in his proposed May Budget Revision, Gov. Schwarzenegger recommended throwing almost 400,000 elderly, blind and disabled Californians out of IHSS (almost 90 percent of those enrolled in the program). To add insult to injury, he also proposed cutting our wages to \$8 an hour. Obviously, this would have gutted the IHSS program and possibly destroyed our union. But thanks to you, this isn't going to happen.

Thousands of you traveled from as far away as Butte, El Dorado and Placer Counties to participate in an amazing rally in Los Angeles on May 22. It was likely the largest rally of homecare providers in California history. Hundreds more of you have gone to the State Capitol to plead our case. And many more have taken part in vigils, rallies and meetings at local legislators' offices and elsewhere all across the state.

These efforts were appreciated--and noticed. They helped insure that the governor's May proposals would be pretty much dead on arrival in the Legislature.

Now I wish I could tell you that we have prevented any cuts in IHSS. But in all honesty, I cannot, despite UDW's best efforts to protect the program.

So long as the governor continues to take his orders from the anti-tax Republican minority in the Legislature, and as long as that minority blocks attempts to get a fair, equitable budget which raises needed revenue, we will face some potential cuts in IHSS.

We're working hard to stay on top of the situation and will keep you informed of the latest developments. And, depending on what happens at the State Capitol in the coming days, we may need to mobilize you for additional action.

But whatever happens, you can be very proud of what you and the other members of UDW have done. You have saved the IHSS program for hundreds of thousands of our most vulnerable citizens. And you have made it possible for UDW to keep on fighting for you in Sacramento and across California.

In Solidarity,
Laura M. Reyes, President

A Message from the Executive Director

In past years, UDW has been faced with some very difficult problems, from internal union strife to financial instability. Despite this, the strength of our active rank-and-file members along with effective internal organizing has helped us build and strengthen our union.

Today, the state's budget crisis presents us with an even more difficult challenge: To help maintain the IHSS program and insure that our 65,000 members and the clients we serve are not cut from the program.

We are also under unprecedented attack from Gov. Schwarzenegger and his right-wing friends, who claim--without any proof to back them up--that the hundreds of thousands of dedicated, hard-working homecare providers are nothing more than fraud criminals.

UDW is fighting back (*see the story on page 3 for an example*), but we must do more. We need to retool and refocus our priorities so we can do a better job of advocating for you and making sure you are treated with dignity and respect. We want to be a resource

for everything from preparing you and your clients for annual assessments, hearing and appeals to finding you a place to repair your client's wheelchair.

But all the information and resources in the world are useless if you don't use them. That's why we need you to stay current on what's going on at UDW and to contact us whenever we can be of services. Remember, it's YOUR union.

Together, we can make a difference.

In Solidarity,
Doug Moore

Latest News on Wages, Program Cuts

As this issue of *Caregiver Extra* goes to press, Gov. Schwarzenegger and the leaders of the State Legislature are still trying to come to an agreement to deal with the state's budget crisis. No decisions have been made on cuts to IHSS or changes in the program.

At the same time, a Federal judge has temporarily blocked the governor from rolling back IHSS wages to \$9.50 an hour. The rollback had been approved as part of the 2009-2010 budget passed in February and would have affected UDW providers in Placer, Riverside, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties. Members in those counties should continue to receive their negotiated wages, not \$9.50 an hour. The governor has appealed the judge's preliminary injunction.

Please check our website: www.udwa.org or contact your UDW office for the latest developments.

UDW Fights Back Against Governor's Claims of IHSS Fraud

For months, partisan politicians, ambitious district attorneys, and some in the media have conducted a vicious campaign alleging "widespread" fraud and abuse in the IHSS program. Without any real proof, some of these ideologues have argued that the fraud rate in IHSS is up to an astounding 25 percent.

Last month, Gov. Schwarzenegger climbed on board the fraud bandwagon. Again without substantiation, the governor claimed that he could save \$1 billion or more in state funds merely by "cleaning up" IHSS fraud and abuse. Instead of concentrating on real solutions to the budget crisis, he spent nearly a week on a "fraud whistle-stop campaign", including several news conferences on the subject as well as a meeting with a few eager DA's and their associates.

UDW is not standing by while the governor smears dedicated, hard-working homecare providers and the clients they serve as "fraud criminals." We've

launched a communications campaign of our own, including a full-page newspaper ad in the Sacramento Bee, opinion columns and letters to the editor in other newspapers, and Internet ads. Here's our message to the governor and his allies:

Governor: It's Time to Tell the Truth about Homecare!

Despite your heated rhetoric and misinformation, there is no substantial evidence of widespread fraud in IHSS. For example, many of you have made much of the recent indictment of 25 homecare providers in Los Angeles County. But you've neglected to mention that there are more than 140,000 homecare providers in LA County. Twenty-five cases in a universe of 140,000 is hardly evidence of an epidemic.

UDW believes that ANY fraud in IHSS should be eliminated and those who commit it should be punished. We have sponsored and endorsed a number of bills to curb fraud and abuse and improve training and standards in IHSS. But you and many of your Republican colleagues who complain so loudly about fraud have voted against these bills. Do you really want to end fraud in IHSS or are you just trying to score political points?

You know the real issue is not whether homecare providers and their clients should get background checks and be fingerprinted; the issue is who pays for it. Why are you demanding that homecare providers who make little more than minimum wage pay for their own background checks? No other state workers have to do that.

It's time to stop scapegoating homecare providers and their clients. It's time to step up to the plate and take responsibility for your mistakes. You've had more than five years to fight fraud in IHSS, but all you've done is talk about it.

Largest Rally of Home Care Providers in State History Calls for Real Solutions to California's Budget Crisis

More than 3,000 UDW members from throughout the Golden State traveled to Los Angeles on May 22 to participate in one of the largest demonstrations of support for California's home care providers in state history.

The huge rally, held in front of Gov. Schwarzenegger's downtown LA office, brought the message that the governor's proposed cuts to the IHSS homecare program will not only hurt hundreds of thousands of elderly, blind and disabled Californians, but also will wind up costing the state more money in the long run. Speakers at the rally called on the governor and the legislature to find real solutions to the budget crisis which raise revenue and spread the pain of budget cuts fairly.

"We want real solutions to the state's budget problems," said Douglas Moore Jr., UDW executive director. "What the governor and legislature have proposed is disgraceful."

Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas agreed. In a speech to the thousands of rally participants, Ridley-Thomas repeatedly asked: "Mr. Governor, have you lost your mind?"

That sentiment was also echoed by Lee Saunders, executive assistant to AFSCME President Gerald W. McEntee.

"Something is wrong when the dealmakers at AIG – the hotshots who nearly crushed our economy – can walk away with one-hundred, sixty-five million dollars in bonuses. For doing a terrible job! Yet the workers who protect California's most vulnerable citizens must fight tooth and nail to hold on to nine dollars and ninety-eight cents an hour! For doing the Lord's work!"

San Luis Obispo Chapter Targets Assembly Minority Leader

UDW members, joined by other unions and community organizations from San Luis Obispo County, mounted a successful informational picketing campaign last month at the district office of Assembly Minority Leader Sam Blakeslee.

At the height of the rally, some 70 picketers marched in front of Assembly Member Blakeslee's office, while motorists and other passers-by honked and shouted in support of the marchers. Homecare Providers and clients provided Blakeslee and his staff with testimony about the importance of the IHSS program and the effect cuts in the program would have on them. News reporters interviewed providers and clients, resulting in stories on the evening TV news and in the local newspaper the next morning.

Rally at Riverside Board of Supervisors to Protest Cuts

By Nathan Baca, KESQ-TV News Channel 3 Reporter

RIVERSIDE - Families in the Coachella Valley are waiting to see if the Governor reaches a budget compromise with state lawmakers. They say it could mean the difference in whether they can feed their children.

News Channel 3 talked to homecare providers protesting the budget stalemate. Filling a bus, members of the UDW Homecare Providers Union arrived from the Desert to protest in Riverside. Most are parents of disabled children. They often quit their jobs to take on the full-time job of caring for their children's needs.

Robert Quintero of Desert Hot Springs cares for his disabled daughter. The state used to pay him \$11.50 an hour. Quintero says, "They try to lower it to \$9.50. That's not very good." When asked if he could feed his family on that salary, Quintero replies, "No. Not with that money."

Cheering on their fellow homecare providers, they came in numbers to the Riverside County Board of Supervisors meeting because it was the only place they knew to vent their anger.

Ricardo Cisneros, UDW Regional Coordinator, told News 3: "A lot of these clients will end up in institutions and nursing homes, which will cost the state 6 times more than what they're paying these home care providers now. So it does not make sense to make these cuts."

Francy Honda cares for her son, Nathan. He has Weaver's Syndrome. It acts like autism. "I had to leave my work to stay at home with him," says Honda. "It's made a huge difference for our family, for all of us. To have to suddenly know the funds won't be there for us... I don't want to put him in an institution."

New San Diego County IHSS – UDW Union Contract Approved by Members

Following a year and a half of intense and often contentious negotiations with the San Diego County Public Authority, the UDW Bargaining Committee finally reached a tentative agreement with the Public Authority for a new contract, which was ratified by the members and the County Board of Supervisors in June. There are two important elements in this proposed contract, which will run through the end of 2011:

A salary increase of 25 cents an hour. This will bring the wages of county IHSS providers up to \$9.50 an hour. This is the maximum amount that the state will reimburse the county under terms of the current state budget.

For the first time, health care benefits will be provided by UDW, not by the county. The proposed contract creates a Union Health Care Trust Fund which will be funded by the Public Authority but administered by UDW. This means that the union will have the opportunity to obtain the best possible health benefits for members and work towards more affordable premium co-pays.

WE NEED YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS

The fastest and cheapest way for us to contact our members is through e-mail. Please provide us with your current e-mail address. It's simple. Just go to the UDW Web site: www.udwa.org Look for the "E Activist Network" heading on the top left of the page. Fill in your e-mail address and hit the "Sign Up" button.

When you sign up, the UDW E-Activist Network will notify you about:

- Events in your local community (like negotiations and meetings)
- Actions at the statewide level (like legislation that affects funding for IHSS).
- Ways to contact the decision makers who determine wages and support for IHSS providers and their clients so that you can let them know your views.
- New features or updates on your UDW web site.

Your information will be strictly confidential. We will not share your e-mail address with others. And we won't bombard you with unwanted e-mail.