



# IHSS Coalition

## QUALITY CARE BEGINS AT HOME

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### **Advocates Urge the Legislature: Stand up to Governor Don't put Californians at Risk ; Don't eliminate 375,000 Jobs**

SACRAMENTO - Representatives of more than 450,000 seniors and people with disabilities and those who care for them today urged the State Legislature to fight Gov. Schwarzenegger's mean-spirited and hypocritical proposal to destroy the In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program.

In his 2010-2011 spending plan released today, the governor proposes to effectively dismantle IHSS, a nationally recognized program which helps 450,000 low-income disabled, senior and blind Californians stay safely at home and avoid unnecessary, expensive and unwanted institutionalization.

The elimination of IHSS would cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars to provide care for thousands of Californian IHSS consumers forced into hospitals and nursing homes, which cost at least five times more than home care. Worse, many will likely not be able to find such placement and end up without the assistance they need to live safely at home.

In addition, despite his call for "jobs, jobs, jobs," in his State of the State address earlier this week, the Governor's proposal would eliminate more than 375,000 home care jobs, raising California's unemployment rate to more than 14 percent and force some home care workers to turn to public benefit programs for food for their children.

The Governor's 2010-2011 spending plan goes further than last year's budget proposal, which proposed throwing more than 400,000 elderly, blind and disabled Californians--90 percent of all IHSS recipients--out of the program. While the Legislature firmly rejected that plan, it did vote in July to eliminate or drastically reduce services for more than 100,000 IHSS recipients.

In the July budget vote, 20 Democratic State Senators and 45 Democratic Assembly Members voted for the IHSS cuts. In addition, 10 Democratic Senators and 12 Democratic Assembly voted to endorse the Governor's multi-million-dollar campaign to demonize home care workers and consumers by alleging widespread fraud in IHSS, despite the absence of any proof that widespread fraud exists in the program.

IHSS supporters today vowed to fight the Governor's budget cut proposals in the legislature, where legislators from both parties have recognized the need to help the elderly and disabled live independently in our communities.

The 1999 U.S. Supreme Court Olmstead decision affirmed the responsibility of states to ensure that people with disabilities, including seniors and children receive care in the most integrated setting. This governor acknowledges that IHSS keeps people out of more costly and less desirable out-of-home placement in nursing homes or other institutions but seeks to destroy it anyway.

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*(See next page for reactions to the proposed cuts by IHSS consumers and advocates.)*

"The seniors I represent paid taxes their whole lives, believing that when they needed help they would have it. Even a small amount of IHSS can keep them safely at home; now the Governor is breaking their trust. It is time for all legislators, especially Democratic lawmakers, to be held accountable. They must turn down the Governor's mean-spirited and hypocritical proposal", said Gary Passmore of the Congress of California Seniors.

"Last year, legislators were given a "take-it-or-leave-it" budget dictated by Senate and Assembly leaders and the Governor. This year's budget must be debated and decided in a process which allows all members of the Legislature, as well as key stakeholders and policy experts, to observe and participate", said John Wilkins, an IHSS consumer in Fresno County.

"This lame-duck Governor complains that we have no choice but to cut programs like IHSS. Yet he refuses to even consider ending tax breaks for wealthy corporations or finding other ways to help raise revenues to solve the current budget crisis", said Doug Moore, Executive Director of UDW, the homecare providers union.

"Previous cuts in IHSS have been stopped by courts because they violate provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws. Yet Schwarzenegger wants to ignore the law and push ahead with even more cuts", said Laura Williams, President of Californians for Disability Rights, Inc., a statewide membership advocacy organization.

"The Governor says he wants to create jobs, but devastating cuts to the social safety net will kill jobs and dim recovery prospects for tens of thousands of California families," said Hugh Hallenberg, from Los Angeles County, an advocate for seniors and people with disabilities. "The Governor's threatened elimination of the In-Home Supportive Services program will put 375,000 people out of work instantly and increase California's unemployment rate."

"The Governor gives lip-service to policies like health care for the uninsured, but then turns around and strips funding for home care programs, forcing the elderly and people with disabilities into institutional care," said Deborah Doctor of Disability Rights California.

"IHSS is my independence," said Lauren Steinberg, an IHSS consumer in Berkeley. "My IHSS provider helps me with daily tasks that most people take for granted. It enables me to go to work every day and pay taxes. This Governor's proposal takes away two jobs: my home care worker's and my own. I'll have to go back on benefits; everybody loses.

"It seems that the Governor doesn't realize that if you cut essential services such as these, the need doesn't dry up," said Donna Calame, Executive Director of the San Francisco IHSS Public Authority. "The Schwarzenegger administration has never presented a realistic portrayal of the outcomes of these cuts; that, in fact, we are abandoning people to quiet lives of desperation. The 'lucky' ones will find a place in a nursing homes or go to emergency rooms at a higher cost to taxpayers."

"I'm a senior citizen and veteran and, yes, I'm disabled. However I'm able to live independently at home because of home care, but enough is enough. I'm tired of hearing our state leaders say 'every program budget cut is on the table.' Why is an efficient program that I rely upon still on the table when it's been proven repeatedly to be among the most cost-effective in the country?" said Herb Meyer, a Korean War veteran, senior and IHSS consumer from Marin County. "The public wants a fair and balanced budget, and that means protecting programs that give taxpayers the most bang for their buck."

"While we recognize the dire fiscal situation of the California state budget, it is inexcusable for the Governor to sacrifice the health and welfare of seniors and people with disabilities and their caregivers with these devastating budget cut proposals," said Mary Tinker with the California Association of Public Authorities.

"The public knows a lot about IHSS and supports it by overwhelming majorities in every survey ever conducted. And why wouldn't they? It's both more humane and more cost-efficient than the alternatives" said Frances Gracechild, Executive Director of Resource for Independent Living.