

IHSS Freeze Proposal May be on Ice



It appears that Senate Bill 782 (Cogdill) which proposed to freeze IHSS (In-Home Service Support) worker wages at Jan. 7, 2007 levels may be in the dustbin. There was much testimony against the bill on

March 28, but no motion was advanced from any member of the Senate Labor Committee on this bill. Senator Cogdill has not requested any more hearings on it, so it may die a quiet death. However, the freeze request remains in Gov. Schwarzenegger's budget proposal and debate on that will soon begin in Sacramento.

Meanwhile, Assembly Bill 18, which would allow individuals with a physical disability to use a signature stamp any time a signature is allowed by law, has passed a committee vote and been referred to the Appropriations Committee. Also moving on to Appropriations was AB 238, which would allow IHSS workers to be paid for providing reading services to blind or low vision care recipients, SB 426 relating to emergency

services and plans to meet the needs of disabled individuals (next hearing date on 4/16). AB 1386, which concerns IHSS workers assisting care recipients to health-related and other appointments, has been referred to the Human Services Committee.

Bills relating to criminal background checks for IHSS workers include SB 692 and AB 459, which would both pass the costs on to workers or care recipients and SB 868, which would **not** allow the costs to be passed on. The Public Safety Committee is set to hear SB 692 on April 24, AB 238 will be heard by the Human Services Committee the same day, while SB 868 has just been referred to Human Services.

If you'd like further information on any of these bills, or those covered in previous issues of *Enabled Voices*, give us a call. Also be sure to contact your elected officials and let them know your feelings on these bills.

Arcata Denies Lease Extension to Endeavor

The Arcata City Council voted on Wed., April 5 to deny Arcata Endeavor a lease extension on its current location. Without this, the agency will not be able to apply for a vital Federal grant. Voting for the extension were Members Harmony Groves and Paul Pitno and voting against Endeavor were Alex Stillman and Michael Machi. Mark Wheatley was not present for the vote.

Group Discusses Humboldt Mental Health Services/Issues

Shortages of psychiatrists in the area. Difficulties with medications. High suicide rates. The continuing stigma associated with mental illness.

These were some of the topics raised by about 30 people, including many with mental illness, at an April 5 meeting to discuss the state of mental health in Humboldt County. The

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gathering also featured information from area groups such as Mind Menders, NAMI (National Advocates for the Mentally Ill), and the CARE group. The event was mc'ed by Henry Willey, Member & past President of Humboldt County's Mental Health Board.

Willey noted that President Bush's proposed budget contains massive cuts to Medicare and Medicaid that will adversely affect the mentally ill and that a bi-partisan mental health parity bill is being considered in the U.S. Senate (S. 558: Mental Health Parity Act of 2007). It would provide parity between health insurance coverage of mental health benefits and benefits for medical and surgical services. He further noted some relevant, proposed legislation in California and of threats to the intent of Proposition 63, which was passed in 2004. The latter implemented a 1% tax on individual millionaires to further fund mental health services in California.

Willey, who himself has a mental illness, encouraged involvement by others with mental illness in solving some of their own problems. "We need to stay empowered," he emphasized.

**TCIL: (707)
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Be A Voice for Disabled in Arcata

Do you live in Arcata, have a disability, and want to become involved? Consider applying for spot on the City of Arcata Board of Permit and Handicapped Access Appeals.

This 7-member Board includes two spots for members with disabilities and they can sit on the Board only for accessibility issues. Members serve 4-year terms without compensation and meet when summoned by the chair only for an appeal. Members have the powers and duties to hear appeals of decisions made by the Building Official on any matter for which an appeal is allowed under City regulations.

Applications are available at the City Manager's Office, Arcata City Hall, 736 F Street, Mon. through Fri., 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 5 p.m. or online at www.arcatacityhall.org/pdf%20forms/Application.pdf. Call (707) 822-5953 for more information. The application deadline is 5 p.m., Friday, April 20.

NOTE: The term "handicapped" has not been in common useage for years. **The City of Arcata** should be encouraged to recognize this fact by changing the name of their "Board of Permit and **Handicapped** Access Appeals." "**Disabled**" is the preferred term.