

Accessibility of Voting Sites Remains An Issue

Tri-County Independent Living (TCIL) staff visited 12 voting sites during the California State Primary Day on Tuesday, February 5 in order to check on accessibility. It was found, in this limited sample, that major issues do remain here in Humboldt County that affect the opportunities for people with disabilities to vote.



This Eureka site had no disabled parking & no signs/cones indicating temporary disabled parking.

Specific polling places visited were located in Eureka, Blue Lake, Arcata, Freshwater and McKinleyville. Some of the problems discovered included that disabled parking spots were not properly signed, no low tables were available for voting for people using wheelchairs and there was no privacy when tables were provided, poor lighting for people with visual impairments, paths from parking to voting areas were not properly marked and/or not safe, exterior doors were not left ajar and many were very heavy, and obstacles in paths that could have affected people with disabilities.

Many of these issues could have been re-

solved through such simple solutions as proper signage or minimal education of poll workers. Others were site specific and may not be fixed without building renovations.

TCIL recognizes the value of poll workers and the difficulty of finding adequate numbers and locations of polling sites. However, it must be noted that voting is a basic right for Americans, including those with disabilities. They are protected by various federal laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Voting Accessibility for Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984. People with disabilities should not have to jump through special hoops in order to vote at a polling location.

If you experienced any such difficulties in this past election, please let us know. TCIL hopes to work with the Humboldt County Elections Division in future elections to make voting go as smoothly as possible for those with disabilities.



CA Senate Recommends Some Budget Cuts

The California State Senate Budget Committee recently voted to cut \$2 billion in funding for schools, health care and other services. This action was taken in response to the pending budget crisis faced by the State. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently called for 10% across-the-board cuts in order to deal with a deficit

projected to be \$14.5 billion by next year.

The cuts passed by the Senate include a suspension of cost of living increases for SSP recipients and a 10% cut to Medi-Cal providers, due to begin this coming July 1. No actions were taken on IHSS and Medi-Cal optional benefits

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Community Choice Act Gains Co-Sponsors; Still Waiting on Thompson & Feinstein

Four more California U.S. Congressmen have signed on to HR 1621, but our Rep. **Mike Thompson** was **not** among them. This bill--the so-called "**Community Choice Act**" --would provide individuals with disabilities and older Americans with equal access to community based attendant services and supports. S. 799 (the U.S. Senate version of the bill) **has** been co-sponsored by CA **Senator Barbara Boxer**, but **not** by **Senator Dianne Feinstein**. You can express your feelings o this legislation by calling (707) 225-3311 (Thompson) and (415) 393-0707 (Feinstein).

Rep. Thompson has signed as a co-sponsor of the ADA Restoration Act, as has **Senator Boxer**.

Tri-County Independent Living, 2822 Harris St., Eureka, CA 95503. For questions on this publication, call Glenn Reed at (707) 445-8404.

Medi-Cal Bill Advances

Amidst all the bad budget news streaming out of Sacramento is one positive: AB 851 was passed by the Assembly on Jan. 29 and now goes on to the Senate. This bill would expand Medi-Cal eligibility and extend resource exemptions for recipients.



Want to take some action for disability rights and issues? Join the **Disability Action Network**. Contact Cindy Calderon at (707) 445-8404 for more information.

Local Happenings

March 16 (Sunday)--11 a.m. - 3 p.m., Bayside Grange; TCIL's **Humboldt Pie** fundraiser, featuring a pie baking contest, pie eating contest, music, refreshments and more. Call 445-8404 for more info.

IMPORTANT DATES

Feb. 22--Last day for bills to be introduced in CA State Legislature.