



CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE RETARDED

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REPORT BY PRESIDENT MARION LIEBERMAN

CAR Quarterly Board Meeting

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This meeting will primarily focus on the Governor's Budget which was just released this month. As in the previous seven years, once again the disabled in the community are asked to sustain cuts.

The Governor says "we have to live within our means." He says he can't pick and choose who gets cuts; however, he has done just that, and it is the disabled and poor in the community who are the chosen people. The Governor wants:

- A cut of \$47 a month to welfare recipients.
- No cost of living increases for health care and social services programs.
- No 4.5% increase in SSI.

The Governor will curtail the state's Medicaid (MediCal) program with a \$1,000 cap on dental services, and to those receiving a MediCal - a \$27 a month premium. The bulk of the savings to MediCal would come by expanding the use of managed care for a savings of \$136 million by 2007.

The Governor proposes as he did last year to reduce the pay of IHSS workers from \$10.10 per hour to \$6.75 - a savings of \$195 million.

The Governor is proposing cutting renters' credit for low income seniors - a savings of \$100 million annually. While the state proposes to close Agnews, the Governor does not fund the community adequately. And on and on it goes.

It is wrong to require California's poorest and disabled to sustain cuts while the most affluent are protected. It is unconscionable to ask the disabled to make further sacrifices while -

- Yacht owners do not pay sales tax.
- Business partnerships are allowed to keep their property taxes down.
- Large corporations can move money offshore to avoid paying the state.

Closing the loopholes could reduce the deficit by half; however, the Governor refuses to

look at these tax breaks.

Republicans say the tax breaks add up to a small savings; yes, if \$4.3 billion is small.

The Governor takes \$84.7 million Washington provides for Medicaid programs and uses the money to plug the California budget gap instead of improving community services for people with developmental disabilities.

The state O.K.'d \$80 million in tax refunds to large companies that paid no state corporate income taxes.

The Board of Equalization voted to give 18 companies refunds for manufacturing equipment mostly for technology. The refunds amount to an unwarranted gift of public funds which could be declared an unlawful act by the courts.

The Governor reminds me of the Sheriff of Nottingham. He takes from the poor and gives it to the rich. Where is Robin Hood when you need him?

The budget system is a mess - I agree; however, if the system is broken let's fix it. There are savings to be found, and a raise in taxes for the wealthiest Californians would honor our commitments. I see raising taxes as one way to close the gap between revenue and spending.

California has cut taxes since 1999, saving taxpayers \$12 billion while starving state programs.

The Governor must put taxes on the table. Reagan did it, and Wilson did it. The Governor needs to ask for sacrifices across the board, not just from us.

There are many who receive increases in revenue, salaries, and benefits. California taxpayers and businesses claim some \$35 billion worth of tax breaks each year. These must be reviewed.

Raising taxes may be painful, but it is certainly more decent than turning our backs on our most vulnerable citizens. We cannot continue controlling budget spending by cutting programs to the disabled. I cannot imagine anyone supporting balancing by imposing further hardships on persons with disabilities. We have a responsibility to each other in a civilized humane society. All platitudes aside, we are going to have to dig in and fight back over the next several months.

There will be a series of public hearings throughout the state in the coming weeks. We must be there to point out the loopholes and inequities in the budget.

Later on on our agenda, we will discuss CAR's strategy for addressing proposed budget cuts. We must come up with an action plan so that all of us here speak with one voice.