CCWRO Weekly New Welfare News

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In Brief

● **GOVERNORS BEG FOR $40 BILLION AND ALLEGE THEY'RE NOT ASKING FOR HELP** - The nations Governors meet with President-Elect Barack Obama on December 2, 2008 in Philadelphia. The message from the Governors through the National Governors Association (NGA) Chairman, Ed Rendell was that they were not asking for federal relief, but would like the stimulus bill to include a $40 billion relief (welfare) to states in the form of revised federal matching for Medicaid. California Governor Schwarzenegger said publicly that California needs no help from the federal government. Does that mean he will reject the millions of additional Medicaid matching dollars from the federal government?

● **BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE NO. 3 ON HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES FOR 2009-2010** - Senate President Pro Tem **Darrell Steinberg** named the membership and chairmanships of the upper house's five budget subcommittees late Friday. Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Health and Human Services Sen. **Alex Padilla**, Chair (D); Sen. **Mark Leno** (D); Sen. **Gilbert Cedillo** (D); Sen. **Elaine Alquist** (D); Sen. **Leland Yee** (D); Sen. **Dave Cox** (R); Sen. **Bob Huff** (R) and Sen. **Sam Aanestad** (R).

● **SAVE THE DATE! EVENING OF APRIL 18, 2009** - The National Lawyers Guild San Francisco Bay Area Chapter will have its annual Testimonial Dinner on April 18, 2009 in Oakland, CA. Their Champion of Justice will be **Stephen Bingham**. More details, including an opportunity to honor Steve, will follow in January. Tickets will be available beginning in March. See www.nlgsf.org for more information.

● **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WON'T RELEASE STATE PARTICIPATION RATES FOR FY 2007** - By June 30, 2008, the federal government was supposed to have all data necessary from the states to determine the Federal Participation Rates (FPR) for FY 2007. After getting this information, rather than issuing a report of what the FPR are for each state, HHS sent the data back to the states and gave them until September 30, 2008 to comment on the data that they provided to HHS on or before 6-30-08. So what is the FPR for FY 2007? This information is still no where in sight.

CalWORKs Partnership Meeting Report Dec. 2-4, 2008

DSS and community colleges do a CalWORKs partnership meeting annually. This year, the session opened with a speech from **John Wagner**, Director of DSS. **Mr. Wagner** said that the Governor asked **Barack Obama** for help with federal DRA rules regarding the federal participation rates (FPR) and the penalties for failing to meet the FPR.

What was not said was that the Governor's proposed budgets have always raided TANF money for General Budget Relief. In California TANF is known as CalWORKs. In 2008-2009 $1.4 billion was taken away from CalWORKs budget and used to subsidize the state budget. Given the fact that annually about 20% of the CalWORKs money is siphoned off by the Governor and the Legislature, why should Congress fix anything when states refuse to spend the money available to meet the FPR. Congress should only offer relief to states who have spent all of the TANF federal and state money directly for the benefit of state TANF recipients who have qualified for the State TANF means tested program.

CharrLee Metsker, Deputy Director of Welfare-to-Work Programs said that DSS does not want TANF money going back to federal government in the form of penalties for not meeting FPRs because that would be harming poor families. The truth is that every budget proposed by the administration since the inception of the TANF program has been penalizing poor families at the rate of +$1 billion a year. Since 1988-1989, California has taken over $12 billion from the mouths of impoverished families who live on the same fixed income amounts that they received in 1989 for the State General Fund.

We attended several workshops done by DSS staff. It was like watching Fox News. All of the presentations we attended only talked about the greatness of the CalWORKs and WtW programs. On the other hand, Fresno County welfare director **Julie Hornback** said that they are not able to bring down their sanction rate.

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Not mentioned was that 44% of the WtW unduplicated participants are not getting transportation. No mention that most supportive services were not advanced, rather they were reimbursed, causing undue hardship on poor families. There was no mention of the fact that many families are sanctioned when they actually had barriers that were never considered before imposing the sanction.

One of the DSS presenters told me that they want to uplift counties. At a workshop presentation regarding elevating the work participation rate, by **Joseph Jackson and Ryan Fruchtenicht** of DSS, they talked about doing focus groups with participants. They said WtW participants loved their social workers or job search leaders. DSS staffers never mentioned anything negative said by participants. We were later told by DSS that there were indeed negative comments about the county WtW program from the participants during those focus groups.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHERS NETWORK (IMN) ANNOUNCED

Mothers' Movement Summit October 24-26th featured the participation of 28 international mother organizations (including CODE PINK, NOW, Mothers Acting Up, Momsrising, Literary Mama, Sistersong, Motherhood Project, NAMC, MINE, Welfare Warriors -- to name just a few) and was attended by two hundred academics and activists from more than twenty countries.

At the final day of the conference, representatives of 20 plus mother's organizations announced the establishment of the IMN. The initial goal of the IMN is to have mother organizations from around the world to join this network. In particular, the IMN urges mothers from the global south, mothers in poverty, mothers with disabilities, welfare mothers, grandmother caregivers, etc. to join in this new network.

Folks interested in joining the IMN can send details about their organization by February 15, 2009 to sharonmarks@rogers.com. A website that will feature a quarterly newsletter and calendar of IMN events worldwide: www.internationalmothersnetwork.org.

MAXIMUS LOBBYIST WIN

At a 11-18-08 Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors meeting, the Board refused to approve a new contract for welfare to work private contractor PSI, who had only spent $25,000 on lobbying the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors according to the Los Angeles Times. **Maximus**, the loser in this bidding war, spent $200,000 on lobbying. Maximus has been running this program for years, only bidding for it once about 13 years ago.

On a 3-1 vote the supervisors rejected the recommendations of the entire Los Angeles County bureaucracy and sided with the lobbyists of **Maximus** to reject the PSI as a contractor and do a new Request for Proposal at the cost of at least $250,000.

Maximus has made millions of dollars and they have failed to address the corrective action plans from their DPSS monitors of Los Angeles County and have been alleged to have performed inadequate work.

At the hearing, the first attack came from Republican **Supervisor Antonovich**. He appeared to be well prepared by the Maximums lobbyists. He attacked PSI for having labor violations filed against them in other states and also because a state rescinded a contract with PSI. He was not a "yes" vote.

Then came **Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky.** The proposed contract would give PSI $22.6 million and $3.9 million in incentive payments. The county could do the same job for $25.3 million. Under LA County Prop. "A" the county cannot contract out a service to a private company that would cost more than what the county would do it for. DPSS was not able to explain how this meets the Prop "A" requirements.

He also asserted that the entire process was flawed because DPSS contract evaluators had discarded their rating sheets in accordance with county policy. It was pointed out that this policy had been in effect since 2003. But **Supervisor Yaroslavsky** wanted to see the rating sheets.

At this point, a representative from the union addressed the Board to alert them that all contracts where the rating sheets were discarded are invalid and void and should be recalled. The supervisors did not respond to this observation for their mission was only to stop the PSI contract so their Maximums buddies can continue to make millions of dollars.

The Board finally rejected the recommendation of DPSS and **DPSS Director Philip Browning**, who used to work for Los Angeles County Department of Child Support. Mr. Browning commented "I never knew child support was so good".

DPSS was ordered to do a new RFP, do not destroy rating sheets and notes and Maximus continues to make their millions until someday the bidding process is done at the cost of another $250,000 plus. The county has already spent about $4 million for doing the request for proposal and responding to the protests filed by **Maximus** and their lobbyists.