

CCWRO Welfare News

Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations, Inc.
1901 Alhambra Blvd. Sacramento, CA 95816

CCWRO.ORG

March 28, 2011
Issue # 2011-03

In Brief

Stage 3 Child Care - Last year, the Legislature terminated Stage 3 childcare. The court stopped the cut, but according to county officials many families never got back on Stage 3. Moreover, many families were unable to afford childcare and have ended up on welfare.

The State Department of Education is crafting new regulations regarding a variety of programs including: Latch Key, Attendance, Timely Payments and Trust line. CDE has a long-standing policy of operating in secrecy and without transparency. They have intentionally refused to work with representatives of the childcare program consumers, choosing instead to cooperate only with providers.

CalFRESH (Food Stamps)
At the 2-3-11 CWDA CalFresh Committee Meeting, DSS stated that if the food stamp recipient fails to check the resource box on the QR-7, it is not incomplete for CalFresh. The big question is how this would affect CalWORKS recipients. Would a failure to check the resource box also mean the QR-7 is not incomplete for CalWORKS?

Food Stamp NOA Waiver - Utah received a FNS waiver to send Food Stamp Notices of Action by email. DSS has agreed to distribute the Utah waiver to counties throughout California that are interested in pursuing similar waivers to enable them to send Food Stamp NOAs by email. This is not being allowed in California, yet. For advocates, one county that has expressed an interest in the waiver is Los Angeles.

Voter Registration - Voter Registration is a hot topic in the office of the Secretary of State. They are revising a manual designated for public agencies. There is a workgroup that is working on this issue. The law provides that voter registration must be offered to all households at application, recertification and when there is a change in address.



2011-2012 State Budget News

The Legislature recently voted to cut CalWORKS benefits to families in need to 1984 levels, without any adjustment for inflation. Both Democrats and Republicans voted for this cut. In fact, Governor Jerry Brown proposed reducing benefits to families in need by 13%. Through the serious efforts of the public benefits advocate community and Democratic Legislators we were able to persuade the Governor, and his team, to limit the cuts to 8%.

The recent CalWORKS cuts ensure that families in need are worse off today than they were 35 years ago. No one can articulate why, including the Governor, welfare recipients should suffer greater hardship simply because the State of California has mismanaged its fiscal affairs. If we really propose to protect liberty and equality for the citizens of this state, perhaps the employees of the Department of Finance, the Governor's Office, and the Legislature should have their paychecks reduced to levels present in the mid-1980s. Would they lead by example? The short answer, of course, is no. In contrast to negative stigma of welfare recipients in our state Capital, is the fact that children living in impoverished families contributed \$2 billion worth of CalWORKS funds to the California State General Fund is frequently overlooked. Similarly overlooked is the fact that welfare recipients, since 1998, have contributed about \$20 billion to the General Fund while living on a fixed income that hasn't changed in over 20 years. Yet, the California Government has made the assessment the easiest route to financial health and freedom is to write off the poor. As we "tighten our belts" families in need will go without food, shelter, or even the most basic protections that were previously afforded them.

Was it necessary to take \$690 million out of the mouths of poor women and children? Again, the short answer is no. But it certainly was politically expedient. Simply aligning the CalWORKS work requirement exemption age with the food stamp program work requirement (e.g. families with children over the age of six (6)) could have saved the \$690 million. Amazingly, this seemingly reasonable approach was rejected. One can't help but wonder at the propriety of treating the resources used to support the poor as bargaining chips for political popularity. But perhaps that's the legacy we will leave for future generations.

The budget battle is not over. Californians need to mobilize to protect their most fragile citizens. Currently before state legislators is an initiative to create a June ballot to raise \$12 billion in taxes. If this initiative fails, the budget battle will begin anew in June 2011.

On the positive side, the ill-conceived CalWORKS so-called long-term reforms enacted in 2009 were repealed.



Washington D.C. News

The U.S. House of Representatives passed HR 1, which would significantly cut programs serving the poor. Women Infants and Children (WIC) was cut by 10%, the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) by 7%, family planning was cut 100%, and Headstart was cut by \$1 billion. Meanwhile, those persons falling in the top tax bracket will continue to get their tax relief of \$700 billion over the next five (5) years.