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Workfare Runs Into Strong Opposition

Sacramento

Two key legislators said yesterday that they oppose the work-for-welfare proposal worked out by a bipartisan coalition of legislators and Deukmejian administration officials.

The proposed program, known as workfare, would place nearly 200,000 able-bodied welfare recipients who do not have children under 6 years old in jobs or training programs. Legislation authorizing the program could be introduced in the Legislature by tomorrow, backers said at a news conference yesterday outlining their plan.

Assemblyman Tom Bates, D-Oakland, chairman of the Assembly Human Services Committee, said the proposal would create an administrative nightmare and end up being repealed in a few years.

Senator Diane Watson, chairwoman of the Senate Health and Human Services Committee, said she wants a plan that provides "real work at real wages."

Instead of workfare, the government should "create more jobs," Kevin Aslanian of the Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations said yesterday.

"Workfare does not give a person a paycheck. It gives them a welfare check," he said. "What a person wants is a paycheck and not a welfare check."

The workfare proposal, disputed for several years, was negotiated principally by Assemblyman Art Agnos, D-San Francisco, and Health and Welfare Secretary David Swoap. It is known as "the Agnos Compromise."

The backers include Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, D-San Francisco, and Senate minority leader Jim Nielsen, R-Woodland.

The proposal would affect up to 200,000 welfare recipients, mostly mothers who are the recipients of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program and whose children are older than six.

Under workfare, if the recipients fail to get work after training, they would have to work on public service jobs to pay for their grants. They would receive \$5.07 an hour, the average starting salary in California.

Associated Press