
Welfare-rights organizations against plan

By Thorne Gray
Bee Capitol Bureau

In a page-by-page analysis called a "recipient impact statement," the **Coalition of California Welfare Rights Organizations** condemns a bipartisan workfare plan introduced Thursday in the Assembly.

"It is clear that workfare does not benefit recipients," the coalition said. "It creates a free work force for state and local government and non-profit organizations, such as hospitals, nursing homes, community action agencies and other organizations who will use women with children as a cheap labor force without any benefits to the women."

The organization, which calls itself an independent, statewide, grass-roots organization, has fought workfare for years, counting Assemblyman Art Agnos, D-San Francisco, among its more powerful allies.

Now, the coalition said, Agnos has been recruited by Secretary of Health and Welfare David Swoap to help draft a workfare program that mistakenly "assumes that our country has unlimited jobs." Agnos, a liberal, and conservative Swoap drafted the proposal together.

Workfare proponents say many of the coalition's points may be inaccurate and have expressed willingness to fine tune the legislation, although there may be

enough votes in both the Assembly and the Senate to approve the plan's major features.

The points the coalition wants considered include:

- Required public hearings on the individual county workfare plans to be drawn up over the next three years.
- Performance standards for the program, and a way to end workfare if those standards are not met.
- More protection for refugees, who need education rather than an endless search for work they cannot get.
- Assurance that all the counties will offer a true range of options for welfare recipients, not just "job search-workfare."
- Actual expenses for child care, transportation, books and other necessities, not just inadequate allowances.
- A way to be sure that child-care services for welfare families are safe.

The workfare program assumes that welfare recipients have never worked a day in their lives, the coalition said.

"It appears that the proponents of this legislation do not consider raising children a 'job'; rather it is something that 'women do naturally,'" the coalition said. "What AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) recipients want are jobs, jobs, jobs.

"We want to go to work, get a paycheck and be able to say that we are not on welfare.

"This bill forces us to work and still be on welfare."