

Colleen Wieck

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Sent: Friday, March 26, 2004 9:07 AM
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Subject: If people want to live in Alabama or Nebraska, move there

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Wednesday, March, 24, 2004

Behind the budget pleas: waste

Welfare, disability programs shouldn't get pass because of who they help

By RAY HAYNES

Republican assemblyman from Murrieta

What a field day for the heat. A thousand people in the street. A-singin' songs and carryin' signs. Mostly say, "Don't you dare cut any of our programs!"

With apologies to Buffalo Springfield, the annual summer budget fight has started early in Sacramento. Welfare mothers, students and many others are showing up at the Capitol to beg us lawmakers to give them your money.

Except their stories are mostly false. Most of these people are scared into protesting by people who make money from the system. Welfare bureaucrats, union bosses (who profit from the dues public employees pay) and "service providers" profit from the system, sometimes making handsome profits, and they want the flow of money to continue. A program becomes their excuse to profit at taxpayers' expense. Worse, they threaten to deprive people who really are hurting in order to protect their \$100,000 annual salaries.

Take the Department of Developmental Services. DDS deals with developmentally disabled people - some who need a wheelchair, some with mental challenges, all relying upon government to help them. California provides many services to those suffering these disabilities. And every time anyone suggests we look at these services, the craven administrators try to protect their phony-baloney jobs by hiding behind the wheelchairs.

This year, the governor proposed changes in how the state deals with the disabled, so the Capitol is filled with very frightened people in wheelchairs. But of course no one wants to throw them out of their wheelchairs. They are being scared by the profit-fattened administrators who are the real targets of the governor's spending controls.

Consider some facts: In 1998-99, California spent \$9,500 on each person with a disability served by a state Regional Center. Today, it is \$13,400. In addition, in '98-'99, the state spent \$124,000 per person who has to live in state-run disability facilities, called Developmental Centers (DCs). Today, it is \$205,000. In addition, we are running a 20 percent vacancy rate at the DCs. We could close down two or three DCs, deliver the same quality service, and save money.

As for Regional Centers, they are a mess. One lobbyist privately admits that of the 21 Regional Centers, seven are adequate, seven are bad and seven are horrible. They have become dominated by the "providers" who profit from the system. They've gone from service center to profit center - at whose expense? The disabled. "Providers" have approved "services" such as a pool (built at taxpayer expense) at a house supposedly to help a disabled person, but, of course, everyone else uses it, too. They have approved house additions at taxpayer expense, and have talked about approving expenses for "dolphin therapy": swimming with dolphins, like you can do in Hawaii for \$300 per hour.

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Another DDS program recently attracted a lot of negative attention. It was discovered the DDS and the local regional center were attempting, through a "Sex Offenders Active Reorientation System," to place four sex offenders together in a home in a Southern California desert community. They say these sex offenders are no danger to the community. If that is true, why would they need full-time supervision and security costing almost \$600 per sex offender per day (total cost: more than \$800,000 to house these four for a single year)?

Cutting these "services" and controlling bureaucratic expenses won't throw anyone out of his wheelchair. It may cost a bureaucrat or two their jobs. And it is these bureaucrats who draw up and approve their own budgets. Somehow they just can't see the wisdom of eliminating their jobs, so they scare already frightened disabled people into protesting. It is shocking; it is distressing, but it is overdue.

The governor hasn't budged, so the battle is joined. Stay tuned to see if we can actually control spending on these programs, or if the bureaucrats who profit from the system can dodge the budget bullet again by hiding behind the wheelchairs. Wednesday, March, 24, 2004

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