

## [A Day Where Republican Actions Didn't Quite Mesh With Their Words: Real Life Testimony on California Republican Budget Cuts and Families With Special Needs Don't Match Sarah Palin's Rhetoric on the Convention Floor](#)

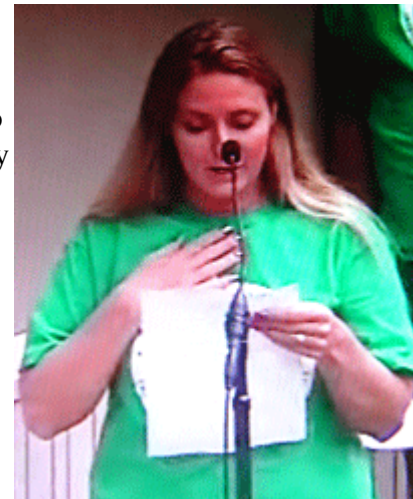
By Frank D. Russo



Yesterday was a surreal one, listening in the afternoon to family members, often choking back tears, while telling the Assembly Budget Committee what proposed Republican cuts to the California budget mean to them in their daily struggle to tend for disabled children and parents, and then tuning in to Sarah Palin's address to the Republican National Convention that excoriated Democrats and where she told those families of special needs children that she would be an advocate for them as Vice-President.

One of them, Amy, had this to say:

"My name is Amy. I am a member and co chair of United Domestic Workers from El Dorado County. I'm here today to voice my opposition to the Republican proposed budget cuts to the disabled children and the people who take care of them. My son was born at 26 weeks gestation at 2 pounds, nine ounces. He has suffered his whole life. He has lived on many machines which I had to learn how to do in order to care for him myself. I have kept him out of convalescent homes. I refuse to put him there, so that made me his care provider. ... We're relying on Christmas cheer and other churches and other community resources like that. A lot of us qualify for welfare, Medi-Cal, things like that. Sorry... [cries] I have not been able to go back to work because no day care center will take the responsibility of child like mine. So really, you see I have had no choice and that IHSS is our only saving grace right now. Please do not cut us down to minimum wage and we do oppose these cuts."



There's a real compassion disconnection here between the words of Republicans and their actions that couldn't be wider. The week started out with Republican State Senators announcing that they would be in press events in Democratic districts at facilities serving the poor, disabled, and those who need health benefits, and pushing for a continuing resolution to keep the benefits going because they truly care about them. Yet they would not promise, [as Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg asked](#), that they would not cut these very same benefits in their alternative budget that will be voted on next week. But, even though their proposal has not emerged as a printed bill, the details are getting out of what they are proposing and it's not really difficult to see why they wanted to keep them secret until now. Guess what? Cuts to programs needed to keep disabled family members and children in the home.

Democratic [Senator Sheila Kuehl mocked them](#) for their new found concern, and stated on the floor: "And when you say to my Pro Tem, "I'm sorry, we can't vote for any taxes,"—and when you say to my Pro Tem, "Oh, we don't like borrowing very much either"—when you way to my Pro Tem, "We'll have to do it all with cuts,"—why can you not admit that all of those cuts fall

most assiduously on the very people that you are supposedly going to visit? How nice of you to “visit” a child care facility. How nice of you to “visit” people who are poor and sick. In my district, we don’t “visit” them, we work to serve them.”

While much of yesterday’s Assembly hearing focused on the \$5 billion cut in education funding in the Republican proposal, when the public was invited to speak, most of them told the legislators what cuts to health and human services mean to them.

Here’s what just a few of the others who testified had to say about these cuts:

“My name is Herb Meyer, I’m 77, I’m a recipient of IHSS benefits. I’m also the Chairman of the IHSS public authority in Marin County. I’m here today to strenuously object to the cuts that came down out of the Republican proposal to the IHSS segment. It’s close to \$400 million.



“These cuts are drastically affecting many of my IHSS consumers –over 400,000 in the state, many of whom may end up going into a nursing home or being institutionalized and costing the state, again, many, many more dollars to keep them in that nursing home.

“Perhaps you are wondering what the R stands for on my chest. It’s not my high school letter for football. It is R for Republican. I am a registered Republican and I voted for a Republican. I’m a believer in the Republican standards for limited government and limited spending. And for responsibly—the R really stands for responsibility. Let’s do it right and let’s be responsible.

“I think it’s important to spread the burden. I’m in favor of the sales tax. ...Once again, we need new revenues. I’m against the cuts that you have proposed. They are a surprise after all the work that has been done the past 4 to 5 months to come forward with this budget.”

Next:

“I’m Gary Passmore of the Conference of California Seniors and I’d like to, in spite of the fact that most of your dialogue with the Department of Finance focused on education and the lottery, I’d like to say a few words about the health and human services \$1.5 billion in additional cuts that are proposed in the Senate Republican budget proposal. And specifically about the IHSS program.

“Most of the cuts that are embodied in the budget that you have seen have been heard by you and your counterparts in the Senate for quite a while. They were wrong in 2006. They were wrong in 2007. They were wrong in January when you held hearings. They were wrong in March. They were wrong in May. And they are wrong today. They will hurt people.

“The Senate proposal seems to assume in Medi-Cal that poor seniors in California don’t need to see, they don’t need to hear—if they have diabetes they don’t need to walk. That’s the net result of those proposals. They are inhumane and cruel.

“In the IHSS program, you’ve heard Herb, you’ve heard me, you’ve heard lots of advocates in recent years talk about how this is really a way the state of California saves money. You’ve got 400,000 people. And under the rules of the program, the vast majority of those people could be served in very high cost institutions—nursing homes. That’s not what they want and that’s not what you should want.

“Somehow, the people who propose this draft of a budget recommendation have ignored that advice once again. So, I want to reframe it for you for just a second.

“If we heard that there were nursing home operators in California that were not serving meals to their clients. If we heard that they were not washing soiled laundry for their patients, we would be up in arms. We would have investigators in those facilities. We would be probably fining them and in some cases, decertifying them. And yet that is precisely for the comparable population who choose to live in their homes what this budget proposal embodies. For some reason, the idea persists that if they live down the block from you, that they don’t need care—as opposed to those who live a few miles from you in an institution. It’s just plain wrong and the Congress of California Seniors strongly opposes this budget recommendation.”

Then another:

“My name is Frances Gracechild, I’m with the California Quality Home Care Coalition. We are opposed to this budget for many reasons. I think Gary Passmore did an excellent job of explaining to you why people who choose to live in their own home using using in home supportive services have as much right to quality services as those living in institutions, and that it’s a savings when people live in the community. ...

I” have deep respect for really the very difficult job you have to do. I know you all think about it all the time and are worried about it just like I am and all the other people here. I like your metaphor of architecture and I just want you to think about the architecture of community services that allow people to live in the community. This budget lights a fire and burns down half the program that would make it possible for people to live in the community. In home supportive services is only one example.

“Also, the COLA [cost of living increase] that has been taken away from SSI recipients [the aged, blind, and disabled] is another big part of the puzzle. What’s the point of living in your own home if you don’t have sufficient funds to pay the rent and buy the groceries?

“The 1999 Olmstead Supreme Court decision made it clear to all of us. That that is a civil right for people have the right to live in the community. You must pass the budget that makes that possible.

Faye Herald spoke:

“I care for my mom. She has Alzheimer’s and she’s 83 years old, so you know she’s not going to get any better. This program, I’m so grateful...because it allows me the opportunity to care for her during this period of her life. And for you to just take it away—I used to work for SBC, I had a very good job—I had benefits and everything. And I had to give all this up in a day. I had to put my life literally on hold. And to be asked to even sacrifice even more now, I think that’s unreasonable; it’s inhumane. I don’t think it’s fair.



“And for my mother to face going to an institution, she’s already terrified because she doesn’t understand what’s happening to her. It’s just not my mom, it’s—there are other people in the same situation...My mom’s worked all her life.”

And from the Counties of California on the front lines here, some chilling testimony:

“I’m Frank Mecca, the Executive Director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California. ... We’re extremely concerned about the depth of the cut to health and human services programs that we operate on your behalf and serve the most vulnerable people in our state. You’ve heard about several of them and I’d like to touch very quickly on two programs where we really believe that this proposal hangs a bull’s-eye on the most vulnerable people in our society—those are abused and neglected children and abused and neglected elders and dependent adults. The recipients of child welfare services, foster care, and adult protective services.

“The magnitude of the cuts in this proposal aimed at those programs will have a devastating impact on those populations, and we frankly think that the proposal is just unsafe for people who we have a legal and moral responsibility to protect.

“To give you an example of the impact of the 15% cut to child protective services. That would represent about 850 social workers that won’t be on the street. Based on information from the state, what would 850 social workers in the child protective services system do in a year? They’d investigate 160,000 allegations of child abuse and neglect—that they won’t do under this proposal. They would provide services to 60,000 families in the home so children can remain safely at home and not have to be removed by government and have to be placed into foster care at much greater expense. They would achieve permanency for 45,000 kids who can’t be returned home safely either with relatives or legal guardians or through adoption.

“So we’re talking about cuts to the programs that are frankly frightening unfathomably slow to the members that I represent.

“With respect to senior victims of abuse and neglect—one of the fastest growing social problems we think in the state—a ten percent cut in that program as proposed would translate into 19,000 incidents of abuse and neglect, or financial exploitation to adults--that will not be dealt with by

our system. We simply can't tolerate cuts of that depth without reducing the safety and reducing the well being of the most vulnerable people in our society. Victims of elder abuse and neglect are three times more likely to die prematurely than those who are not. And so I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that this is a matter of life and death and we strongly oppose those cuts."

Another day in the life. A matter of life and death. Thank God the Democrats are trying to protect those who are in need. Actions, not words.

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