

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **GOVERNOR SIGNS FEUER LEGISLATION RESTORING PROTECTIONS FOR ABUSED AND NEGLECTED NURSING HOME RESIDENTS**

**August 6, 2009 (Sacramento)** - Today Governor Schwarzenegger signed Assembly Bill 392 (Feuer), urgency legislation that will immediately restore \$1.6 million for local Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs over the next year. The bill will help ensure protection from abuse and neglect for California's vulnerable and elderly residents of nursing care and assisted living facilities.

"This legislation could make the difference between life and death for nursing home patients facing abuse or neglect. Now patients and their families who depend on the Ombudsman to monitor facilities and investigate key complaints can rest a little easier," said Assembly member Mike Feuer (D-Los Angeles).

The funds for the local programs will come from existing penalties paid by long-term care facilities that have failed to comply with federal laws for the protection of residents, meaning that AB 392 has no General Fund costs.

Last year, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed \$3.8 million in funding for local Ombudsman programs, representing about half their funding. As a result of the cuts, the programs have been forced to lay off staff and drastically reduce services, compromising their abilities to investigate complaints and monitor facilities.

Since these cuts have taken effect, residents have suffered the dire consequences of unchecked poor treatment. In late June 2009, a Northern California facility owner and one care giver were arrested on suspicion of criminal abuse and neglect of a resident whose untreated pressure sores were so severe that they resulted in fatal sepsis. After the arrest, the two suspects posted bail and continued to collect payment to provide care for the six other facility residents. With the funding restored for the next year, local Ombudsman programs will be able to respond to cases where similar reports of abuse are made.

"California's senior citizens not only bear a disproportionate share of reductions in health and home care services, but they are particularly vulnerable to abuse," said Assemblymember Dave Jones (D-Sacramento), a joint author of the bill. "This is prevents the rollback of the oversight and protections provided by the Long-Term Care

Senior Ombudsman program. I am pleased to join Assembly member Feuer in authoring AB 392 and speaking out to protect funding for this invaluable program."

Local Ombudsman programs conduct frequent unannounced monitor visits to facilities, and they provide timely response to reports of suspected abuse and neglect. They investigate thousands of abuse cases each year. Without the scrutiny of the Ombudsman programs, the facilities are reviewed just once a year (or less) by government agency inspectors. No other program duplicates this critical advocacy service.

California's population of adults over 60 is projected to grow to 6.5 million by 2010 and up to 9 million by 2020. As Californians grow older, it will be especially necessary to make sure that the long term care facilities that serve this population are properly monitored and complaints investigated.

Assembly member Mike Feuer's website: <http://www.assembly.ca.gov/a42>  
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