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Children, Vulnerable Deserve Better than Governor's Game of Chicken

*Budget Proposal Would Cost 300,000+ Jobs and Put Children, Families In
Harm's Way*

SACRAMENTO, CA – With his release of the 2010-11 budget package today, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger made clear that he's counting on federal funding to solve more than a third of California's budget problems, but even his best-case scenario would spell disaster for children and other vulnerable Californians.

"California's children and our vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities deserve better than to be caught in the middle of a dangerous game of chicken," said Frank Mecca, Executive Director of the County Welfare Directors Association of California. "We can't tell an abused child, a hungry family, or a frail senior to call Washington when they come to the county in need of services."

Under the Governor's plan, if the state does not receive \$6.9 billion in extra federal funding, a new round of cruel cuts would be triggered, including elimination of the In-Home Supportive Services program that helps seniors and people with disabilities live at home rather than institutions, elimination of the highly successful CalWORKs welfare-to-work program that helps families with children get back on their feet, and elimination of health care for 900,000 children.

While County Welfare Directors support the pursuit of additional federal dollars to close the gap between what the federal government provides and what California's spends in administering critical programs, the Governor's budget package doesn't maximize the federal dollars for which California is already eligible.

"There's no question that more federal dollars will help California create jobs and avoid even deeper harm to families and children. But the Governor doesn't use the federal money that's already available to the state," said Linda Haugan, Assistant County Administrator, Human Services for San Bernardino County and President of CWDA. "For every dollar cut from CalWORKS grants for poor children under the Governor's budget, the state only saves 20 cents. Eighty cents of every dollar is federal money we'd simply be sending back."

Even under the best-case scenario, where the state receives nearly \$7 billion in federal aid, the budget package proposed by the Governor relies on far-reaching cuts that would turn back the clock 20 years on the welfare of the state's children, put 400,000 vulnerable seniors and people with disabilities at risk of institutionalization or even death, and make it even harder for families to climb out of poverty. The Governor's budget plan would implement these damaging proposals:

- A 15.7 percent cut to CalWORKs grants, reducing the average family aid from just \$513 to \$431 per month. On top of last year's four percent reduction, payments would be reduced to 1989 levels.
- \$200 million in cuts to child care services that help working, poor families who are transitioning off of CalWORKs. Without these services, fewer families will be able to continue working.
- Failure to restore \$120 million (\$80 million GF) for child welfare services the Governor vetoed last year, leaving thousands of children at risk of prolonged abuse and victimization.
- Elimination of In-Home Supportive Services for 427,000 seniors and people with disabilities so severe they have been identified as requiring institutionalization if they don't receive help with basic tasks. Only 63,000 individuals would be spared, and more than 300,000 workers would be sent to the unemployment line.
- Elimination of programs for legal immigrants, including the California Food Assistance Program (CFAP) (the state-funded equivalent of food stamps for legal immigrants), the Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (which provides cash benefits in to legal immigrants in lieu of SSI) and Recent Noncitizen Entrants program (which benefits to legal immigrants who have not been in the U.S. long enough to qualify for CalWORKS). The proposal would also eliminate Medi-Cal benefits for legal immigrants who have lived in the U.S. less than five years.

In addition to causing harm to California's most vulnerable populations, these proposals sharply undermine California's economic recovery.

"Just two days after committing to creating 100,000 jobs for Californians, the Governor's budget proposal threatens to send at least 300,000 workers to the unemployment line," Mecca added. "Rather than a plan to create 'jobs, jobs, jobs,' the Governor's approach could be more aptly named, 'one job and three pink slips.'"

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The County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) is a nonprofit association representing the human service directors from each of California's 58 counties. The Association's mission is to promote a human services system that encourages self-sufficiency of families and communities, and protects vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect.