



SUMMIT UPDATE ON CALWORKS MAY 18, 2005

Mike Herald, Legislative Advocate at the Western Center on Law and Poverty (WCLP) set out 3 objectives at the January 7 Working Families Policy Summit. *Here is an update on his advocacy work.*

Objective 1: Streamline eligibility processes and eliminate unnecessary eligibility requirements on recipients and counties.

WCLP is co-sponsoring AB 1298 (Evans) which would simplify eligibility for CalWORKs, Food Stamps and Medi-Cal by permitting counties to allow applicants to self-certify that they meet the asset tests of each program. The bill also requires the Secretary of Health and Human Services to convene a work group to make recommendations to the Legislature for uniform policies and procedures for CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, Food Stamps, Healthy Families, child support, child care and WIC, including alignment of eligibility and application requirements.

The bill passed out of Assembly Human Services Committee on April 12, and is on suspense in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

For more information, see the [WCLP Letter of Support for AB 1298](#), or link into the [Legislative Advocacy page for WCLP](#).

Objective 2: Preserve existing CalWORKs grants and services by preventing: grant cuts, repeal of cost-of-living allowances, elimination of child care entitlements, and reductions in services for CalWORKs recipients.

WCLP is advocating to preserve CalWORKs services cut in the Governor's budget first released in January and revised as of May 13 (the May Revise). Overall, WCLP's analysis indicates that public benefit recipients did not benefit from the state's \$4 billion increase in revenues, with *three* exceptions. The May Revise now allows CalWORKs families to keep the same amount of earnings from work (called an Income Disregard), it pulls back a proposal to increase sanctioning of recipients, and it restores tax credits for seniors and the disabled.

Of concern to WCLP, the budget exacts \$424 million in cuts from CalWORKs families, by:

- **Cutting CalWORKs Grants by 6.5%**, resulting in an overall cut of \$210 million. Grants would be \$18 less in real dollars (not including inflation) than in 1989.
- **Repealing the CalWORKs COLA (and thus not paying the July 2005 COLA)**, resulting in a \$164 million cut.
- **Reducing Employment Services**, resulting in a \$50 million cut.

In addition, WCLP is opposing \$172 Million in cuts to CalWORKs child care still included in the May Revise. Specifically, WCLP opposes the creation of time limits for child care for families leaving CalWORKs and the reduction of payments to small child care providers, many of whom provide care to CalWORKs families.

For an excellent (pre May Revise) analysis of the state budget's impact on CalWORKs, see the [May 2 WCLP Budget Letter](#). Track ongoing WCLP budget activities on the [WCLP legislative advocacy page](#).

Objective 3: Increase the state budget by collecting all taxes due, closing tax loopholes, restoring the top tax brackets, expanding the sales tax to services, and changing the way that commercial property is treated under Proposition 13.

In January, the state deficit was estimated at about \$8 billion. Advocates recognized that, without new revenues, many programs for the poor would be at risk of significant cuts.

WCLP and other human service advocates also recognized they were not the only groups interested in identifying additional resources, and they banded together with education and health groups to advocate for increased revenue.

Go to <http://www.cafoodbanks.org/thursday/> to see the budget sign-on letter endorsed by more than 100 organizations. Also see the letter by women's groups opposing budget cuts. Human service advocates may soon shift their focus to a possible special election and the Governor's proposed Live Within Our Means Act, which would give the Governor unilateral power to cut education and human service programs.

Stay informed on WCLP welfare advocacy by going to their web page at <http://www.wclp.org/>.