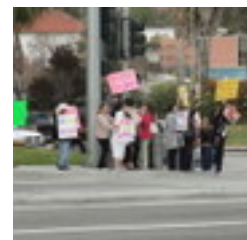
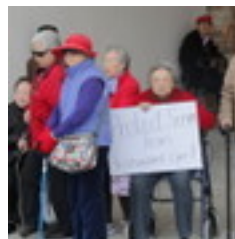


PROTESTORS AGAINST CUTTING ELDER CARE PROGRAM PICKET HUFF

Hundreds of protestors picketed the Walnut offices of state Sen. Bob Huff, R-Diamond Bar, today as part of a statewide effort to thwart proposed cuts to a program for the elderly.

By Melanie C. Johnson and Darren Fishell | February 24, 2011



Hundreds of protestors gathered in front of state Sen. Bob Huff's Walnut office this afternoon to protest the proposed elimination of funding for Adult Day Health Care Centers statewide.

The protestors, including some in wheelchairs, waved signs and chanted "Save ADHC. Save Lives," as some motorists passing by honked their support.

The gathering at Huff's office was one of several protests across the state following recent alternating proposals by Assembly and Senate budget committees to either cut funding or eliminate the program all together. Huff's district includes Walnut, Diamond Bar and Glendora.

Chris Rogers, a nurse whose mother goes to West Covina Adult Day Health Care during the hours she works, said the program should not be cut because it serves as a lifeline for both the elderly and their children who take care of them.

"The program is important because the elderly get to be with their children and not in a convalescent home," she said. "Day Cares keep the elderly living. They are laughing and doing activities."

The Walnut protest was one of a series of similar actions that took place all over California, as elder care advocates united to show their opposition to budget cuts that would take away funding for adult day health care programs serving around 37,000 seniors, many of them suffering from debilitating illnesses.

Advocates statewide collected 110,000 signatures from constituents statewide to deliver to the offices of Gov. Jerry Brown, Senate President Pro Tem Darrel Steinberg and Assembly Speaker John Perez.

Similar Southern California protests also took place at the Glendale offices of state Sen. Carol Liu and the Long Beach offices of Sen. Alan Lowenthal.

Protestors pointed to the Senate Budget Committee's vote last week to eliminate funding for the program as the reason for the stepped-up opposition efforts. Huff, R-Diamond Bar, serves as vice chairman of the committee.

Charles Chuang, program director for the Happy Adult Day Care Center in Brea, said that the California Association of Adult Day Services worked with state legislators to come up with suggested cuts totaling \$28 million. The Assembly Committee voted in favor of the plan, but the Senate Committee voted to eliminate all funding.

"They are frail," Chuang said of the program participants. "They will have to go to the emergency room. They will have to go to a nursing home. It won't save money in the long run."

William Bird, a spokesman for Huff, said the senator would rather see reforms made to school funding, business regulation and pensions for unionized state, city and county workers rather than cuts to programs like adult day health care, but times are tough.

"This isn't a cut that Bob Huff has proposed. He has been asked to act on it and he doesn't like it, but when you have a budget deficit, there are going to have to be some reductions in spending," Bird said. "He doesn't believe that the governor is proposing the reforms that he would like to see."

Bird said there were enough votes to pass it, but said he could not comment on what would have happened if Huff had voted the other way.

He said that the senator hopes the governor hears the protestors.

“This is democracy in action, according to the senator, and he supports the right of these people to gather in front of his office and voice their opinion,” Bird said. “He would urge the governor to start looking into other areas and pension reform and school reform rather than focusing on cuts that are going to hurt the most vulnerable.”

Dr. Harold Fajardo, with the West Covina Adult Day Health Care Center and the Ramona Adult Day Health Care Center, said cutting the program would cost jobs for workers at the facilities, as well as for employees of related businesses that provide meals and transportation, Caregivers can't work if they don't have help taking care of their loved ones, he added.

“There is a spiraling effect,” he said.

Elisa Gosuico, a representative from the San Bernardino Adult Day Care Center and the Camelot Adult Day Health Care Center in Hemet, said participants pay \$77.12 a day for care while their primary caregivers are at work. Hospital care daily would run around \$1,500 a day. Her center serves mentally and physically disabled clients age 18 and over.

The families of the people she serves have to work every day and they need care for their loved ones, she said.

“These are the people who have nothing,” she said. “These are people who have mothers and fathers who are over 70 years old who are disabled. What will happen to these families if they cannot work?”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.