



IHSS Coalition

QUALITY CARE BEGINS AT HOME

For Immediate Release

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STATE PLANS TO SPEND MILLIONS TO PHOTOGRAPH IHSS CONSUMERS DESPITE LACK OF AUTHORITY OR PROOF OF WIDESPREAD FRAUD

Sacramento (March 17) -- Without any authority from the Legislature, the Schwarzenegger Administration is planning to purchase up to \$5 million worth of military/security cameras to take pictures of the 450,000 seniors and people with disabilities who receive In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) homecare.

Last year, the Legislature approved the administration's proposal that county social workers must fingerprint all IHSS consumers as part of a so-called anti-fraud initiative. However, the Legislature neither discussed nor approved photographing consumers. Nor has the administration provided any evidence of how much fraud would be stopped by photographing and fingerprinting these consumers; all IHSS consumers must be visited and assessed at home by county social workers before being approved for the program.

The "MorphoTrak" cameras are currently being used in Iraq and other military locations. According to their manufacturer, they are also recommended for, among other things, "border crossings, gang enforcement, and airport/maritime security." The camera itself costs \$4,200, plus hundreds of dollars more for docking stations and other equipment. http://www.morpho.com/MorphoTrak/MorphoTrak/mt_products.html. Each \$5,000 used to buy a "MorphoTrak" camera would purchase nearly 500 hours of IHSS homecare.

Herb Mayer, 79 year old IHSS consumer, chair of the IHSS coalition and a Korean war veteran, said "My social worker knows who I am without needing a \$5,000 camera. How can the administration find money for these cameras but no money to keep the IHSS program going?"

The Administration has projected that it will need to purchase 600 to 1,000 of these cameras, costing between \$3 million and \$5 million. It has borrowed several of these devices from the manufacturer and has solicited Sacramento and San Diego Counties to use them in a pilot project beginning April 1. The District Attorneys in these two counties have been among the strongest proponents of the administration's anti-fraud

campaign. However, a recent report from Sacramento County found a total of only 19 potential cases of IHSS fraud out of 20,365 consumers.

Assemblymember Hector De La Torre (D- South Gate) said: "I am outraged that this administration is again targeting our lowest income seniors and people with disabilities as if they were criminals we need to monitor. How is that we can afford millions for cameras yet we continue to cut their services and the money they live on?"

"The Administration's proposal to spend \$5 million on cameras is ridiculous," said Assemblymember Dave Jones (D-Sacramento). "The money for each \$5,000 camera could instead be used for 500 hours of IHSS care. The Administration has asked Sacramento County to begin a pilot program with loaner cameras on April 1. I am calling on Sacramento District Attorney Jan Scully not to participate in this misguided program."

Assemblyman Alberto Torrico (D-Fremont) states: "I understand the budget crisis - and I understand that there will be no savings which begin to outweigh the cost of these cameras. When social workers are being laid off and poor elderly Californians are going without services which keep them safe, how can this administration even be considering buying \$5,000 cameras?"

"The Governor has once again proposed diverting money from this valuable and cost-effective program", says Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco/San Mateo). "In addition to his years of budget cuts and criminalizing IHSS workers and their clients, this year he proposes to spend scarce public funds on military-style cameras. I will continue to oppose all reductions to IHSS, especially those which deviate from the core mission of providing life-saving assistance to our vulnerable populations."

"This Administration's misguided attack on alleged fraud in the IHSS program has already caused major disruptions to IHSS services for 450,000 elderly Californians who depend on these services," said Senator Mark Leno (D-San Francisco). "The small investment in home support for the elderly keeps consumers out of expensive nursing homes and saves the state money. We intend to use our legislative oversight power to ensure the Governor does not waste government resources and harm elderly Californians who desperately need In Home Support Services."

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