



Advocates waited two hours in the wind and rain outside the federal court building in Oakland to learn they had succeeded in holding off harmful In-Home Supportive Service cuts ... *see p.4*

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## Pushing back against a humanitarian disaster and planning for better times

By Catherine Blakemore, Executive Director



*Catherine Blakemore*

*PHOTO BY RICK JAUREGUI*

California's public safety net was frayed this year by cuts to SSI, In Home Supportive Services (IHSS), Medi-Cal, and regional center services. As a result, many Californians with disabilities were asked to forego the very services that allow them to live safely and independently in the community. Unfortunately, the

Governor's budget issued just after the New Year proposes to eliminate much of what remains of the safety net, stitched together over 30 years.

We have not yet convinced policy makers that, in the end, these cuts cost more. For every person who moves to a nursing home because of losing IHSS the State will have to pay an average of \$59,700 – more than five times the cost of IHSS services. Plus, the loss of home and dignity will take its toll. While it is true that the State faces a fiscal crisis, it is becoming clear we are also on the brink of a humanitarian disaster.

In 2009 Disability Rights California worked to stop the cuts, minimize their impact and provide effective public edu-

cation about their consequences. In two cases (see pages 4 & 5) federal court judges halted the cuts in recognition that the State's budget crisis does not excuse violations of federal law. In one case, the court noted that "...the IHSS cuts would actually cost the State tens of millions of additional dollars" and that "IHSS caregivers reduce the need for expensive emergency room visits and hospitalizations."

This year we also helped tens of thousands of Californians with disabilities fight discrimination, prevent abuse, obtain education, benefits and other services, and made sure that thousands more had opportunities to learn about their rights. Their stories show that even in challenging times, California can become a more barrier free and inclusive place to live.

Now, we have to look beyond the immediate fiscal crisis and envision the future of California. We must look for opportunities to integrate our long term care system, reduce our reliance on institutions and promote safe, quality community living options. We can be at the forefront of national efforts to reduce the use of seclusion and restraint and expand access to public accommodations. We invite you to join us not only in the hard work to preserve critical services to Californians with disabilities but also in creating the vision for what we want California to look like in the decade ahead.

**Cover photo:** Dan Brzovic

**Cover subjects:** (from left) Jessica Lehman, Norma LaBrava, Bob Miller, Loretta Stevens, Jean Stewart, Connie Barker, Tom Ross, Stephanie Miyashiro

**Design:** Hizuru Cruz

*Where necessary, we have protected our clients' identities with pseudonyms.*



## Disability Rights California Board of Directors

*Left-right, top-bottom:  
Leticia Escalera, Diana Pastora  
Carson, Dianne Millner, Kathryn  
Trevino, Russell Rankin, Amy Kalivas,  
Eric Ybarra, Jean Chong*

*PHOTO BY MARGARET JOHNSON*

*Not present: Allison Brightman,  
Jose Flores, Billy Hall, Victor Hernandez,  
Guy Wallace*

*A majority of the Board have a  
disability or are family of people with  
disabilities. The Board reflects Califor-  
nia's ethnic and language communities.*

## Profile: Dianne Millner, President

### Public Members of the Board Committees

#### Legislation

Laura Rasey Miller  
Angela Van Ostran

#### Diversity

Ben Jauregui  
Ofelia DeLa Rosa  
Wayland Wong

#### PAIMI Council

Linda Drattell  
Gail Green  
Robin Thomas

#### OCRA Advisory

Ted Cottini  
Dan Owen  
Spencer McClay

A typical day might find Dianne working long hours in the Oakland City Attorney's Office where she is a supervising attorney; then helping her young adult daughter, Ashley, prepare dinner from recipes she collected from her blind youth group; and finally, tweeting about the stellar progress of the women hoopsters from her alma mater, Stanford. Or she might review a stack of papers for the next Board meeting of Disability Rights California, where she serves as President. Asked about what motivates her to maintain this high level of commitment to her job, family and volunteer work, she reflected:

"After working for civil rights progress during my younger years and then devoting the next years to helping my daughter deal with the prejudice and discrimination faced daily by people with disabilities, I came to see how much these movements had in common. Disability rights and civil rights – we are at an amazing juncture of progress right now in both areas. This is where my energy comes from – the opportunity is right in front of us to go forward, and especially to make sure California does not fall back."

## 130,000 children and adults keep In-Home Supportive Services: Judge grants preliminary injunction to avoid “violating federal law”

David Oster, 34, who has autism and a bi-polar disorder, is a named plaintiff in the class action suit known as *V.L. v. Wagner*, filed by Disability Rights California on October 1. The suit opposes budget cuts to In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) on the basis of the functional index score and ranks.

Oster knows that without support from IHSS, his ability to live independently and safely in his own apartment is seriously at risk. His IHSS provider works about 16 hours a week at a little above minimum wage to help him clean his apartment to keep his living conditions safe, prepare nutritious meals, assist with food shopping and laundry and remind him to take his medications. If Oster’s IHSS services are eliminated, he is at risk of having to live in a more restrictive setting, such as a board and care home or even in a hospital again. When told his IHSS services would be stopped in 2009 due to the budget cuts, he found the fears

about what might happen to him so terrifying that it led to hospitalization.

Recognizing that 130,000 low income people with disabilities would be facing similar life-changing conditions, a legal team based at Disability Rights California worked night and day through August and September to file the class action lawsuit against the Administration’s budget cuts to IHSS based on functional index.

On October 19 in Oakland, Judge Claudia Wilken ruled that the State could not go forward with the cuts based on functional index because essential services could be withdrawn arbitrarily and “people could lose something irreplaceable – the ability to remain safely in their homes.” She added that if the case went to trial, it was likely to be proven that the cuts violate federal law.

However, the fight is not over – the Administration has now filed an appeal.

Information at [www.disabilityrightsca.org/advocacy/V.L.-v-Wagner/index.htm](http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/advocacy/V.L.-v-Wagner/index.htm)



*Left to right: Several Disability Rights California lawyers working on the case: Melinda Bird, lead counsel, Los Angeles (see p. 6); Sujatha Jagadeesh Branch, Sacramento; Fred Nisen, Bay Area; and Taymour Ravandi, Sacramento. At far right is David Oster, one of the named plaintiffs in the case, attending the October 19 hearing in Oakland, with at least 150 people waiting outside in the rain to hear the outcome. PHOTOS BY PAM NOLES, DAN BRZOVIC, MICHELLE GARCIA.*

## 30,000 seniors keep their day programs – for now

### Chauncey McLorin explains how Adult Day Health Care enables independence



Lillie Brantley with Chauncey McLorin

PHOTO BY LEONARD ALFARO

“My 84 year old aunt Lillie has been going to the Hunter’s Point Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) program five days a week for a few years now. That’s where she gets nursing and physical therapy, nutrition services, including a healthy lunch, and socialization that helps with her dementia.

“My aunt is unsteady and likely to fall, so is never left alone. When my aunt is not at Hunter’s Point Center, she is with either me or her IHSS worker.

“Everything in our lives is very carefully balanced so that I can keep my full-time job as a MUNI driver and Aunt Lillie can continue living with us. So when the State decided to cut the services this summer, we were very scared about what would happen next.

“Luckily, Disability Rights California and other advocacy groups were able to convince the judge that the State had not thought through what was going to happen to all these folks who need these services to stay in their homes. The judge saw that the State had the responsibility to provide alternative services to keep people in their homes and could not make the cuts until they did ... in our case, my aunt would have had to go to a nursing home, a very sad alternative.”

Disability Rights California filed the *Brantley v. Maxwell-Jolly* case on August 18, requesting that the ADHC cuts be halted. On September 10, Judge Sandra Brown-Armstrong granted our motion for a preliminary injunction, keeping services in place for now.

Details on the case, including extensive media coverage:  
[www.disabilityrightscalifornia.org/advocacy/Brantley-v-Maxwell/index.htm](http://www.disabilityrightscalifornia.org/advocacy/Brantley-v-Maxwell/index.htm)



ADHC core legal team: (left to right, from top) Dan Brzovic, Jay Koslofsky, Elissa Gershon, Kim Swain, Dara Schur; Suzanne Scott, Regina Kendricks, Elizabeth Zirker, Fred Nisen (see p. 6)

PHOTO BY HIZURU CRUZ

*We were saddened to learn, as we went to press, that Lillie Brantley passed away.*

## Lead counsel profiles: our class action lawsuits

### *Brantley v. Maxwell-Jolly*

- **Elissa Gershon**, staff attorney at the Bay Area office, has focused on increasing and improving opportunities for people with disabilities to live in the community, including class action lawsuits. Reflecting on a recent awards ceremony recognizing the suit to stop the ADHC cuts, she said, “I was humbled but at the same time uplifted by people there who told me, ‘Absolutely, your court cases save lives.’”
- **Elizabeth Zirker** is a staff attorney in the Bay Area regional office and her practice areas include the right to benefits, access to community and institutional services and individual rights advocacy. She said, “Working on this case has been very rewarding because ADHC is an essential service for people with disabilities and seniors, well worth fighting for.”

### *V.L. v. Wagner*

- **Debbie Dorfman** is our Registered Legal Services Attorney, based in the Los Angeles office. Her special focuses are laws affecting people with developmental or mental health disabilities. She stated, “I love my job because I learn so much from working with and advocating for such a wide range of people with disabilities from diverse cultures.”
- **Melinda Bird**, Senior Counsel, based in our Los Angeles office, specializes in civil rights, benefits, health and mental health care, especially for children and youth. She stated: “The best part of the job for me is the top level teamwork between our staff and our community partners that gets results for thousands of Californians with disabilities.”

## Social Security Administration to pay \$500 million to 80,000 wrongly identified “fleeing felons”

In 2008 Rosa Martinez, 52, of Redwood City, California was abruptly cut off from her disability benefits due to an outstanding Miami drug warrant dating back to 1980. However, she had never been arrested, never used illegal drugs and never been to Miami. SSA officials told her she could not appeal until she had settled the warrant, putting her into the same limbo as approximately 80,000 other Americans who were denied benefits because they were accused of fleeing a former address to avoid felony prosecution or prison. By the time Martinez found legal help to challenge SSA, she was nearly destitute.

Settled in September 2009, the class action case (*Martinez v. Astrue*) was brought by the National Senior Citizens Law Center with our assistance. Marilyn Holle, attorney in our Los Angeles office who worked on the case, said, “Many of the people who were denied or stripped of benefits did not know there were decades-old warrants against them, others were misidentified. This settlement will help a lot of low income seniors and people with disabilities – many in California – to hold on to their homes.” Our staff is helping to locate Californians who were wrongly denied and to assist them in reapplying and in some cases claiming back benefits.

Details on the suit and settlement:  
[www.disabilityrightsca.org/advocacy/Martinez\\_v\\_Astrue/index.htm](http://www.disabilityrightsca.org/advocacy/Martinez_v_Astrue/index.htm)

## Access to education: from first grade to college

Our requests from Californians in this area range from help in identifying discrimination and understanding reasonable accommodation, to accessing special education and, if necessary, in obtaining information about rights and laws in their first language. As shown in the following examples, our staff have to know both federal and state requirements to support full participation of students.

In all 4 years of high school, Nietzsche Swauger took German, planning to spend part of his senior year in Germany under the German American Partnership Program. Although he qualified for the program in every way, the school district decided that, due to his autism, Nietzsche's participation would be too problematic for the chaperone and the German school to manage. Nietzsche and his parents disagreed with the decision and came to Disability Rights California for help. We convinced the school that denying his participation due to autism violated the Americans with Disabilities Act. The case settled and the school district arranged for Nietzsche to travel to Germany with his peers, live



*Class on "Staying Safe," run by Office of Clients' Rights Advocates PHOTO BY GAIL GRESHAM*

with a host family, attend the local high school and, as a disability accommodation, paid for his mother to attend as his aide.

Martha Gilliam is a 17 year old high school student with an avid interest in sports. She participates on the cross country and track teams with only slight modifications for her intellectual disability. Although she has been a member for years, Martha was denied the opportunity to practice with the teams during the off-school season and non-school days. Our advocacy resulted in provision of an aide for Martha during team practices on Saturdays and during the summer.

As a first grader, Izquierda Garcia had health issues from a prior cancer treatment, was not progressing at the pace her parents expected and they were worried. They saw that their daughter had poor motor skills and was often fatigued, but they could not convince the school district that she needed an evaluation. We worked with the parents to request an educational assessment in Spanish, and, finally in May 2009 Izquierda was found eligible for special education services.

Ben Treffers, a student who lives close to campus which is full of steep streets, needed a more powerful wheelchair to get to class, to doctor appointments and around the community. Medi-Cal agreed to replace his chair but refused to pay for one with a more powerful motor. With the help of our staff, Ben submitted supporting evidence of how the more powerful chair would aid his independence in college and Medi-Cal approved the request.



## Getting off the streets: a full time job for veterans with disabilities

Since the Vietnam war, veterans have had a tough time getting effective help in dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), even though its incidence appears to rise with each conflict. Also increasing is the percentage of veterans in homeless populations. At Disability Rights California, Michael McPherson, a Naval officer in the Gulf War, has organized a veterans' self-advocacy group in San Diego, offering connections to disability services and advice about navigating the bureaucracy to obtain veterans' disability benefits. The self-advocacy group was recently featured by the San Diego City Beat.

Francesca Sanchez, a U.S. Army veteran, has psychiatric and physical disabilities and has been homeless for 8 years. Like many veterans, Sanchez doesn't qualify for much assistance from the military because no direct link between her service and her disabilities has been established. She first started looking for Section 8 housing in northern California but bumped up against one barrier after another: lack of accessible, affordable housing; bad credit due to medical bills sent in error to her instead of Medi-Cal; and, finally, a denial of her housing voucher after the time limit had expired. Overwhelmed, but determined to get off the streets, Sanchez moved to Orange County to look for rental housing in Irvine, close to her doctors and vocational service. After being denied a rental lease because of bad credit, she contacted our staff. They were able to get her credit report disregarded as a reasonable accommodation under the Fair Housing Law.

As another accommodation, her housing voucher was extended, and after deposits were arranged, Francesca Sanchez, many years after her quest began, moved into her own apartment. Our San Diego staff is helping her to get set up and find a live-in aide.

### Staff Profiles



Agnes Akabogu Williams, Associate Managing Attorney of our new Fresno office, is a specialist in civil rights litigation and special education law. She summarized: "Children doing well is what I am aiming at and working with the community in this area is my passion."



Anastasia Baciagalupo, Clients' Rights Advocate and Christine Armand, Associate Clients' Rights Advocate, work together at the South Central Regional Center in Los Angeles. Baciagalupo sees herself as a bridge connecting families to advocacy skills; while Armand helps parents learn how to build on their children's strengths. They agreed that their proudest moments are when "family members return to talk about their children's successes and how they now know their rights."

## Office of Clients' Rights Advocates works to end discrimination

### Group home resident attends brother's wedding

Sue Shui had made plans to attend her brother's wedding. She notified her group home and her conservator of the wedding date and was given approval to attend from both. A week before the wedding Disability Rights California received a frantic call from Shui stating that her conservator had told her and her group home that she could not attend the wedding. The conservator was threatening the group home if they allowed Shui to attend. We worked together with the Regional Center and Shui's sister to ensure that her rights would not be violated. Shui was able to attend her brother's wedding.

### Bon Voyage

Diana Montana had found a good deal on a cruise to the Bahamas – under \$1000 – and arranged that the cruise line would deduct a set amount each month from her account until the balance was paid. Because of her cerebral palsy, Montana had been clear about her access needs from the beginning, using an electric wheelchair that she could control and no one would have to push throughout the huge ship. So, she was upset when told that she would have to use a folding wheelchair because the cabin doors were not wide enough for her electric one.

Her only alternative, according to the management, was to spend \$2000 for an upgrade to a brand new accessible ship.

Next, Montana called an OCRA staff member, who explained accessibility law to the director. The director then offered an upgrade without cost and made it possible for Montana to add two guests to the package for a nominal fee.



*Ralf Hotchkiss of Oakland, who designs wheelchairs for developing countries, finds out about the latest resources from OCRA Advocate Yulahlia Hernandez and Will Schell, Staff Attorney, who staffed our table at a local disability technology conference in Sonoma.*

PHOTO BY JOSE ARROYO

## California Memorial Project holds 7<sup>th</sup> annual Remembrance Day



For people who lived much of their lives locked away in state hospitals or forgotten in developmental centers, perhaps the ultimate indignity was to be buried anonymously. In their honor, the California Memorial Project, founded and run by advocates with developmental or psychiatric disabilities, works to create permanent monuments at the burial sites and organizes Remembrance Day every fall. On September 21, over

2009 ceremony at Sonoma Developmental Center

PHOTO BY MARGARET JOHNSON

700 community and family members, advocates, friends and former residents gathered for ceremonies at state centers in Santa Clara, Ukiah, Stockton, Patton, Porterville, Norwalk, Manteca, Sonoma and Napa. At the sites of unmarked and in some cases, mass graves, participants recited poems and recounted personal stories. The developmental disability and peer self-advocacy staff of Disability Rights California take the lead in this project, together with People First of California and the California Network of Mental Health Clients.

### We thank our *pro bono* partners for their valuable contribution to our work in 2009:

AARP Foundation Litigation

Altshuler Berzon LLP

Bingham LLP

Brancart & Brancart

Briggs Law Corporation

Constitutional Law Center

Davis Wright Tremaine LLP

DLA Piper

Howard Rice Nemerovski

Canady Falk & Rabkin

Howrey LLP

Hunton & Williams LLP

Law Offices of  
Charles Wolfinger

McDermott Will & Emery LLP

Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP

O'Melveny & Myers LLP

Seyfarth Shaw LLP

## Media interest helps raise restraint and seclusion issues to national level

Our 2008 investigations of abuse of California schoolchildren through harmful restraint and seclusion practices led to probes by CBS, CNN and ProPublica (a new group of investigative journalists), which triggered national level studies by the General Accounting Office (GAO) and the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN). Our staff participated in the May 2009 hearings on these dangerous practices, held in Washington, D.C., chaired by California Congressman George Miller. The hearings revealed serious abuse, in a few instances resulting in death, and the widespread media coverage ranged from YouTube to an in-depth feature in U.S. News & World Report in July. In response, the Secretary of Education called for a new national policy and in December Congressman Miller submitted a bill to bar various practices. Disability Rights California succeeded this year in convincing two schools to

adopt greatly improved restraint and seclusion policies. We are contributing to a white paper on current state laws and planning a session with investigative reporters on this topic for the NDRN 2010 conference in Los Angeles.

Other examples of effective media coverage of our issues this year included: an election-related story featured on local Northern California television about the right of people with developmental disabilities to vote, quoting Marinda Reed, coordinator of the Developmental Disabilities Peer Self-Advocacy unit, about her “amazement that this could still be questioned in the 21st century”; and a July Los Angeles Times Op-Ed by legislative advocate Deborah Doctor, “Gov. Schwarzenegger, show us the fraud,” charging that the administration’s exaggerated estimates of fraud in IHSS were meant to obscure its efforts to undercut a valuable program.



*We joined with 25 other disability advocacy groups this summer to protest against “Psycho Donuts,” a San Jose area small business that was discriminating against people with mental health disabilities as a publicity strategy. For example, a featured donut name included “Massive Brain Trauma” and customers were encouraged to try on strait jackets. After wide media coverage and a few demonstrations outside the shop, it became apparent that the business was benefiting from the free publicity. Following several meetings with the owners and exchanges of opinion, they agreed to change the names of the most offensive products and to withdraw the display of restraints, but refused to consider changing the name of the business.*

## Protecting the rights of residents in state mental health hospitals

Our advocacy for patients' rights has resulted in some small but significant changes to policies and practices this year. One example is we worked with the administration to stop staff from documenting their assumptions in the patients' records. The state hospitals perform random drug screening. When an individual exercised a right of choice and refused the urine analysis, staff noted the result as "positive" in the medical charts. Based on our recommendations, staff now have been directed to only document the facts on medical charts.

Another focus is to improve the delivery of medical and dental services throughout the five state hospitals. The budget crisis is causing delays in outside medical contracts. Our advocacy has resulted in provision of physical therapy, dental care, special services, hearing aids and second opinions for cancer patients.

### Psychiatric hospital ends shackling of immigrant detainees

Under mounting pressure by Disability Rights California's San Diego office and the County Mental Health Director, a psychiatric hospital, Alvarado Parkway Institute (API), ended its practice of shackling and isolating detainees of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Together with the ACLU and other advocates, we pushed for termination of this extreme treatment, consistent with patients' rights guaranteed under state and federal law.

API announced that it is no longer accepting ICE detainees except in an emergency, and if they are accepted, they will be provided with full patients' rights under California law.

### Staff Profiles



Shown above addressing a local rally, Ann Menasche is a staff attorney in the San Diego office, focusing on mental health issues and discrimination in public programs. She stressed, "There is nothing like fighting for the rights of people with disabilities: meaningful work, a living wage and great allies and coworkers."



Merle Levy, Administrative Assistant: "Working with the Legislation & Public Information Unit gives me a window on the creation of laws affecting Californians with disabilities. After laws are adopted, state agencies devise regulations about how to implement them and I really enjoy scanning the proposed regulations for measures that will impact people with disabilities."



**Commission on Disability Access starts to work**  
Disability Rights California supported SB 1608 to streamline needed access improvements, while reducing unwarranted litigation that does not advance that goal. Signed by the Governor in 2008, the law also established a Commission on Disability Access that in 2009 began working on a checklist to improve inspection of violations. In the photo above, Senator Ellen Corbett, author of the law, swears in our advocacy director, Margaret Johnson, who has been named chair of the commission.

*PHOTO BY MERLE LEVY*

## Supporting civic participation by Californians with disabilities

Our collaborative projects staff, based in Sacramento, has been successful this year in involving more Californians with disabilities in civic issues, such as taking an active part in poll monitoring in Los Angeles County during the historic 2008 election; and assisting disability organizations in El Dorado County to identify community issues they find important. The response has been enthusiastic and some results are:

- A follow-up poll monitoring project was conducted in the May 2009 election;
- Several poll sites were evaluated for accessibility and at least two inaccessible sites will no longer be used;
- Agreement was reached to implement measures to ensure that all polling sites in the county are accessible; and
- The El Dorado groups identified housing and public transportation as issues to work on and self-advocacy training is scheduled for Spring 2010.

## Legislative outcomes

Some of the bills we supported over the last year were signed into law and highlights were: (AB 1422) which allowed continued funding for the California Healthy Families program by taxing the profits of MediCal managed care health plans; (AB 1269) which enables people with disabilities who are not working to continue to receive health insurance for up to 26 weeks through the California Working Disabled Program; and (SB 630) requires that health plans cover dental or orthodontic work in certain cases, such as when these services are provided as part of reconstructive surgery or needed to fix a cleft palate.

We co-sponsored Employment First Legislation (AB 287) establishing a process based in the regional centers to explore employment opportunities with young people with developmental disabilities, starting at age 14. The State Council on Developmental Disabilities will set up a committee to launch this initiative.

We are working to reintroduce a couple bills that did not make it to the Governor's desk, including one we co-sponsored ( AB 214) that would require group health plans to offer better coverage of durable medical equipment, such as wheelchairs, ventilators, hospital beds and walkers. Currently, plans are often capped at extremely low levels, often \$2000-2500 with co-pays of up to 50% in addition to the deductible.

## Statement of Activities for Fiscal Year 2009

### Revenue and Support

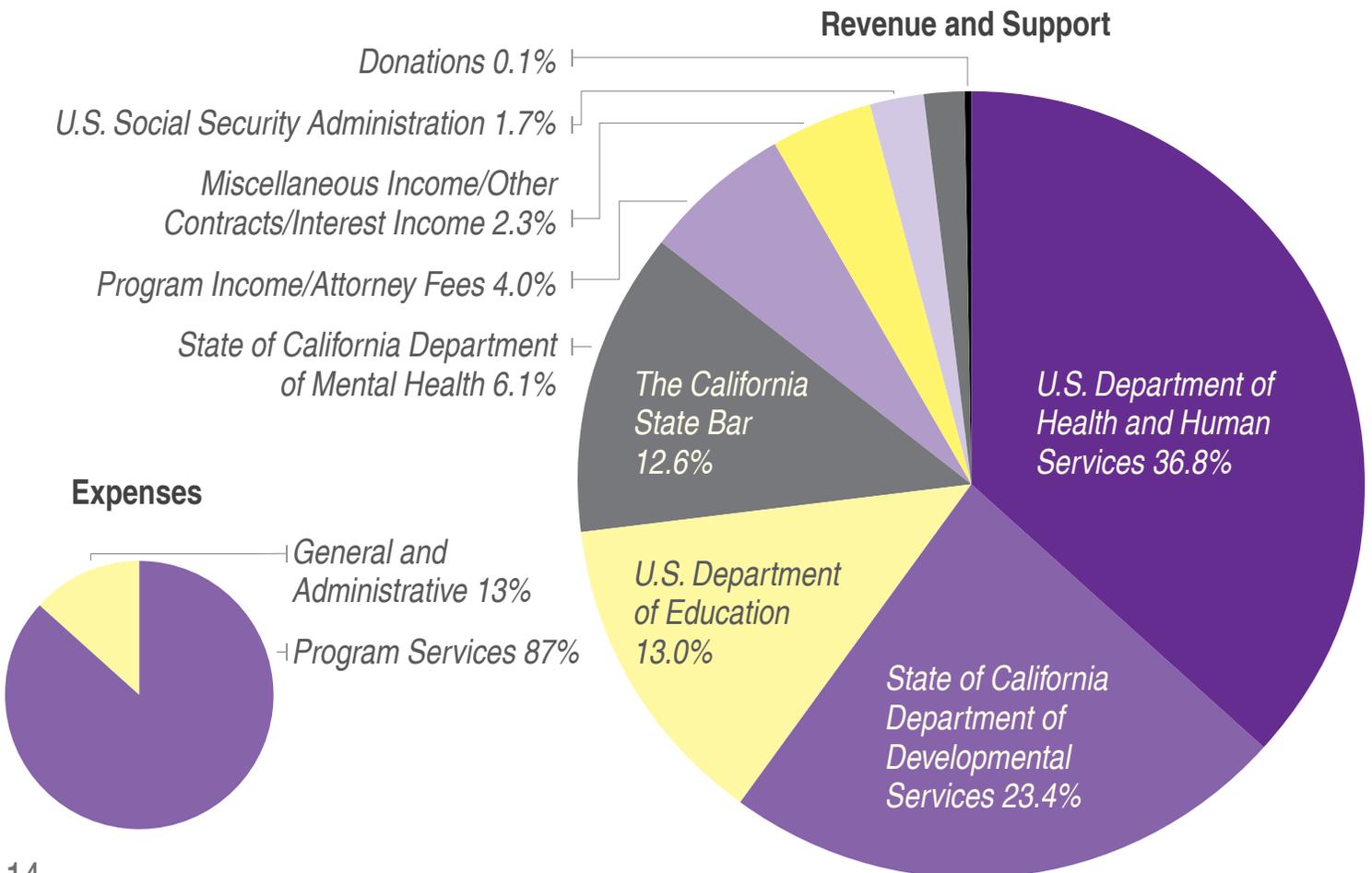
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	\$	7,650,164
State of California Department of Developmental Services	\$	4,849,300
U.S. Department of Education	\$	2,698,583
The California State Bar	\$	2,619,378
Program Income/Attorney Fees	\$	825,271
State of California Department of Mental Health	\$	1,273,565
U.S. Social Security Administration	\$	357,449
Miscellaneous Income/Other Contracts/Interest Income	\$	467,332
Donations	\$	24,775
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b><u>20,765,817</u></b>

### Expenses

Program Services	\$	17,255,668
General and Administrative	\$	2,615,116
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b><u>19,870,784</u></b>

### Change in Net Assets

**\$ 895,033**



## Disability Rights California: Fast Facts

- Founded in 1978 as California's protection and advocacy system to provide direct assistance to people with disabilities in implementing their rights
- In 2008, the agency changed its name to Disability Rights California
- Served 500,000 clients over the last 30 years
- Directly assisted approximately 25,000 Californians with disabilities over the last year and positively impacted an additional 40,000 who benefited from our class action litigation
- Provided training about disability rights in several languages to approximately 33,400 individuals, representing 1740 self-advocacy and community groups, parents' associations and advocacy organizations
- An estimated 34,000 people had the opportunity to speak with our staff at more than 179 community events, fairs, ethnic celebrations and ceremonies
- In 2009, completed core staffing of our newest office in Fresno, joining regional offices in Sacramento, the Bay Area, Los Angeles and San Diego, as well as 22 clients' rights offices based at the regional centers
- In the last 6 months, published over 50 new Fact Sheets in multiple languages about budget cut changes in disability legislation, programs and benefits
- Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy resolved nearly 9000 issues for children, youths and adults with developmental disabilities
- Most requested areas of assistance in 2009 were: education, regional center services, privacy and personal autonomy, abuse and neglect, health and income maintenance.

**Recognition:** Disability Rights California was named the Public Interest Organization of the Year by Howrey LLP at its annual awards event in April; Marilyn Holle, Senior Attorney, Los Angeles office, received the Disability Rights Legal Center's first Advocate Award; Elissa Gershon and Elizabeth Zirker, Attorneys, Bay Area office, were recognized by the Adult Day Health Care Provider Association for their work in getting the Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) cuts halted.



### Support for Grassroots Advocacy:

Two statewide advocacy initiatives that the Board chose to support this year were the June 2009 Convention of People First of California, on the theme "The True 'R' Words – Respect, Responsibility and Realizing Your Dreams;" and Disability Capitol Action Day (photo at left), which brought around 2000 advocates to Sacramento in May for a selection of speakers, information tables and legislative visits.

PHOTO BY MERLE LEVY

## Reach us at any of our California offices:

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(916) 488-9955

### Legal Offices

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#### Bay Area

1330 Broadway, Suite 500  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 267-1200

#### Fresno

567 West Shaw, Suite C-3  
Fresno, CA 93704  
(559) 476-2000

#### Los Angeles

3580 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 902  
Los Angeles, CA 90010  
(213) 427-8747

#### San Diego

1111 Sixth Ave., Suite 200  
San Diego, CA 92101  
(619) 239-7861

### Legislation & Public Information

1029 J Street, Suite 150  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
(916) 497-0331  
TTY (916) 497-0835

### Peer/ Self Advocacy, Developmental Disabilities Peer/ Self Advocacy, & Collaborative Projects

100 Howe Ave.,  
Suite 200-N  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 488-7787

### Office of Clients' Rights Advocacy

100 Howe Ave.,  
Suite 240-N  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 575-1615  
(800) 390-7032  
TTY (877) 669-6023

### Office of Patients' Rights

100 Howe Ave.,  
Suite 210-N  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 575-1610



Disability  
Rights  
California

Statewide Toll-Free  
(800) 776-5746  
TTY (800) 719-5798  
[www.disabilityrightsca.org](http://www.disabilityrightsca.org)

## From the trenches

Following are some comments we got from disability groups, people with disabilities and their families in meetings to help us figure out our priorities for 2010. Of nearly 200 comments we received, around 50 were from people living in institutions and facilities, such as board and care homes.

“Living on \$803 [a month] is so hard in this day and age ... why do they take away from the disabled?”

“It would be a huge step backward if people were forced ... into group homes when supported living would be most beneficial. Please do everything you can to ensure these services are not cut.”

“People with disabilities are the first to get cut – this leads to more discrimination, lack of benefits and other supports.”

“I would like to know what my rights are, in a simple way that I can understand, without legal jargon.”

“It’s really important for us [in the mental health system] to feel we have an advocate or someone in our corner ... Mental health is still the most neglected issue in our nation.”

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