



# **AB 2555 (Feuer & Nielsen)**

*Protecting Vulnerable Seniors from Abuse and Neglect by Restoring Ombudsman Funding*

## **THE PROBLEM**

In 2008, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed \$3.8 million in funding for the local Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs, representing about half of their funding. Under authority of state and federal laws, the long-term care ombudsman programs investigate and resolve elder abuse and other complaints on behalf of residents of California's 1,300 nursing homes and more than 8,000 assisted living facilities.

The cutbacks greatly compromised the ombudsman programs' ability to investigate complaints and monitor facilities, thus putting long term care facility residents at significantly greater risk of abuse and neglect.

Many persons living in long-term care facilities have no family or friends to visit or advocate for them. For over thirty years, ombudsman staff and nearly a thousand state-certified volunteers have filled this void by making regular visits to facilities and responding to residents' concerns. Their frontline work has exposed countless incidents of neglect and abuse and often helps residents protect important rights that might otherwise be ignored.

In 2009, the Legislature passed AB 392 (Feuer), restoring part of the cuts on a one-time basis by appropriating \$1.6 million from an account holding nursing home fines. Unless this funding is continued, ombudsman programs will not be able to serve their purpose.

## **THE SOLUTION**

AB 2555 would sustain ombudsman services by appropriating \$1.6 million for use in fiscal year 2010/11 from penalties paid by substandard nursing homes. It is fitting that nursing home fines be used to support the ombudsman programs given their critical role in protecting residents' health and safety.

## **SUPPORT**

AB 2555 is co-sponsored by CANHR and the following organizations: AARP, Advocacy, Inc., Alzheimer's Association, Bet Tzedek Legal Services, California Alliance for Retired Americans, California Association of Area Agencies on Aging, California Senior Legislature, Catholic Charities of California, Congress of California Seniors, Older Women's League, and Ombudsman & HICAP Services of Northern California. Additionally, it is supported by local ombudsman programs and many other consumer organizations.

**Support AB 2555 to help restore long term care ombudsman services in California.**



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