

Update: Additional Funding for LTC Ombudsman

Sometimes legislation has a second life. AB 2555 (Feuer) never made it out of the Senate Appropriations Committee in August. But there it is, a provision in the 2010-11 California State Budget signed by the Governor on October 8. The provision directs \$1.9 million in funding for California's Long Term Care Ombudsman program. Coming from a special fund (not General Fund) and just for one year, the provision nowhere near replaces the over \$5 million that was sliced from the program in 2008. However, advocates feel this "bridge" funding will help shore up the program while more stable streams can be identified. The LTC Ombudsman provides highly trained advocates who work on behalf of residents in long term care facilities.

This development is especially important in Alameda County, where funds have been diverted from case management and supportive services to plug the gap in the Ombudsman budget. Although we don't yet know how much additional funding will flow to Alameda County as a result of the Ombudsman provision (estimates are in the range of \$40,000), County Supervisors have committed to backfilling supportive services if and when additional funding arrives for Ombudsman.

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After a decade-long effort, the Elder Justice Act (EJA) was enacted as part of the Affordable Care Act of 2010. The new law includes 13 distinct EJA authorizations. Among them is additional funding for Long Term Care Ombudsman, including \$10 million a year for training, and another \$5 to \$10 million in competitive grants to states for training and improving capacity.

"Authorized" amounts are targets, however, and real funding has yet to be appropriated by Congress. Appropriations have been held up since September, when Congress passed a continuing resolution to put on hold these and many other budget decisions. Congress reconvenes this month, but we don't know if the "lame duck" session will take up appropriations for the Elder Justice Act or pass the task on to the new congress.

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