

Assembly Bill 392 (Feuer and Jones) Protecting Vulnerable Seniors from Abuse and Neglect by Restoring Ombudsman Funding

LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAMS PROTECT VULNERABLE SENIORS FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs protect vulnerable residents of nursing homes and assisted living facilities from abuse and neglect through unannounced monitor visits and investigations of the thousands of abuse cases reported to them each year. In contrast to government agencies which may only get into facilities annually (or even less), the Ombudsman programs serve as the front line in the provision of immediate investigative services for the isolated and frail residents of long-term care facilities. There is no other program or agency that duplicates this critical advocacy service, and these cost-effective programs can significantly improve residents' quality of life and quality of care.

FUNDS FOR THE LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN PROGRAMS SLASHED

Last year, Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed \$3.8 million in funding for the local Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs, representing about half their funding. As a result of the funding cuts, local Ombudsman programs have been forced to lay off staff and drastically reduce services. These reductions have greatly compromised the Ombudsman programs' ability to investigate complaints from residents and monitor facilities, thus putting nursing home and assisted living residents at significantly greater risk of abuse and neglect.

THIS BILL WOULD USE PENALTIES PAID BY SUBSTANDARD LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES TO RESTORE CRITICAL OVERSIGHT TO PROTECT NURSING HOME AND ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENTS

AB 392 would restore funding by using existing penalties paid by long-term care facilities that fail to comply with federal and state laws for the protection of residents. These penalty accounts may be used for any activity that directly benefits facility residents, including funding an increase in Ombudsman services. AB 392 has NO general fund costs.

AB 392 would ensure that California's vulnerable and isolated elderly in long-term care facilities are afforded protections from abuse and neglect through the Ombudsman's frequent unannounced monitor visits and timely response to reports of suspected abuse and neglect.

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