

DISTRICT 5 NEWS

SEPTEMBER 2003

Greetings-

District 5 News is a monthly newsletter designed to keep the residents of Alameda County Fifth District informed about local, state, and federal issues. With the federal government facing a ½ trillion dollar budget deficit, and the state and county government also facing deficits it is especially important for people to stay informed about important legislative issues that effect us and our attempt to build a stronger community network of support and services. We hope the District 5 News is a useful and engaging source of information about the issues that concern you the most.

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT/ LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

Legislation for Independent Commission to Investigate War in Iraq

Representative Henry Waxman of California has introduced HR 2625 in the House, a bill to establish the Independent Commission on Intelligence about Iraq. This is a monumental move toward ensuring that the Administration is held accountable for claims made which led the United States into a pre-emptive war that has claimed the lives of hundreds of US troops and thousands of Iraqi civilians. HR 2625 already has 110 co-sponsors including our own Congresswoman Barabara Lee who continues to speak up against pre-emptive acts of war, and insists on democratic accountability from our government. To read the full text of HR 2625, log on to www.congress.gov and search for HR 2625.

Our Future Generation's Education at Stake

Federal fiscal crises are forcing critical cuts to child care, early education, and after-school programs essential to working families. Republicans have initiated the Head Start reauthorization bill, which will radically alter what is perhaps the most successful early education program in the history of this country. If the bill passes it will create a pilot program where eight states administer their Head Start programs at their own discretion. The pilot program would be adopted by all the states if successful. This move would decentralize the administration of Head Start and reduce the comprehensive medical and nutritional resources that have been at the center of the Head Start program. A massive nationwide grassroots campaign by Head Start proponents successfully pressured some Republicans to rethink this Act but it narrowly passed the House by a vote of 217-216. Not one Democrat voted for the bill.

If passed by the Senate, the bill will be devastating for the children eligible for Head Start. In the East Bay, 83% of children eligible for Head Start received basic primary health care, and 75% have a continuous, accessible source for dental care. Head Start parents and supporters can contact their Senators and Congress persons and ask them to restore cuts to the Head Start program and it's budget and vote against the Head Start Reauthorization Bill S.1483.

CALIFORNIA

Proposition 54 has Dangerous Implications

Look out for Proposition 54 on the October ballot. This initiative titled the Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color or National Origin Initiative, written by Ward Connerly would bar state and local government in California from collecting or using information about race and ethnicity. The Alameda County Board of Supervisors along with hundreds of other public agencies such as the California Association of Public Hospitals, and the California Medical Association oppose Prop 54 because it would negatively impact healthcare, education, and basic civil rights protections, by banning demographic information. Prop 54 would stop the state and other public entities (cities, counties, law enforcement agencies, schools, etc.) from collecting or using information, which classifies individuals on the basis of race, ethnicity, color or national origin.

If Ward Connerly's initiative passes the state will not be able to identify discrimination in areas such as housing, hate crimes, and racial profiling. Prop 54 would also prohibit the state from using critical information that provides resources about educational disparities, and discrimination in our society.

The county frequently uses race and ethnicity data to target our resources to meet the greatest needs. For instance, the Public Health Department creates many health messages and strategies that target racial and ethnic groups that suffer more than others from certain diseases, and respond differently to prevention methods and messages. Examples include asthma, diabetes, and HIV. Using county resources in this manner is a more effective way of providing services. We need this data to make sure that we have the right type of services for our diverse community.

ALAMEDA COUNTY

Struggle to Provide Health Services

Alameda County is struggling to provide vital health services and keep the doors open at county clinics. The Alameda County Medical Center (ACMC) recently announced a nearly \$50 million dollar deficit. In response, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors passed two emergency resolutions, adopting measures to address the funding crisis at the ACMC. As the county closes a nearly 142 million budget gap, and is still dealing with more cuts as a result of the state's budget deficit, the Board of Supervisors and the Medical Center Board of Trustees are committed to providing the residents of Alameda with quality health care. Keeping hospitals and clinics such as the trauma center at Highland, and other outpatient clinics providing vital health services open is a priority for the Board of Supervisors. At the same time preserving the safety net of additional health services including mental and public health services is something that thousands of county residents rely on and is critical in preventative health care.

The Board of Supervisors' legislation calls for the creation of a blue ribbon task force to review the governance of the Center and its relationship to the County and immediate implementation of a system of financial controls. The controls include establishing a financial team headed by the County's Auditor-Controller that will have access to all

essential financial information on APMC's budget and work to ensure that sufficient funds are available to support spending, and to get the Medical Center on stable financial ground.

COMMUNITY CORNER

YMCA of the East Bay

Congratulations to the YMCA for 100 years of dedicated community service! Whether you're interested in child care programs, after school activities, health and fitness opportunities or volunteering in community service programs, the YMCA of the East Bay has something for you. The YMCA of the East Bay strives to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, including addressing health disparities; the organization is also leading several health and wellness initiatives by improving access to health education, preventive health care services and treatment options with an emphasis on childhood obesity, heart diseases and immunizations. The YMCA Feelin' Good program in the Oakland Unified School District engages elementary youth in structured physical activities and nutritional education. The YMCA sponsored an African-American Health Summit last May, and is planning a second one in October. They also work at providing strategies for improving the health and well being of the African American community. The YMCA joins in partnership with the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, 100 Black Men, the Alameda County Public Health Department, East Oakland Diabetes Work Group, and Kaiser Permanente to help achieve its goal of building strong kids, strong families and strong communities.

For more information on the YMCA of the East Bay, call:
Robert Wilkins at (510) 451-8039 x157 or email: www.ymcaeastbay.org

Halycon Neighborhood Association

Unity and participation is a critical part of building a safe and healthy neighborhood network. We salute the Halycon Neighborhood Association in Southwest Berkeley for their work in the neighborhood including graffiti removal and clean-ups, crime watch, seismic safety, and community building. They have created a park designed by the neighborhood, coordinated National Night Out against Crime events, and they publish a community newsletter to keep Southwest Berkeley residents informed about neighborhood news. For more info on the Halycon Neighborhood Association contact:
Nancy Carleton, Co-Chair at (510) 644-0172

Does your community have an active Neighborhood Association? If not you can get information about how to start one by logging on to: www.accessfayetteville.org/neighborhood_resources/neighborhood_associations/a_guide_for_starting_a_successful_neighborhood_association.html

Contact us with your feedback.

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson, 5th District
1221 Oak Street, Suite 536
Oakland, CA 94612
Phone: (510) 272-6695
Fax: (510) 271-5151
Email: district5@acgov.org