

Bay Area Regional Network Meeting

Building Regional Advocacy for Latino Health

Friday, March 28, 2008 12:30 to 3:00pm

Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center

22331 Mission Blvd., Hayward, CA

Minutes

12:30pm

Registration and lunch

12:43pm

Welcome and Opening Remarks

José Joel García, CEO, Tiburcio Vasquez Health Centers

- TVHC clinics are primary care providers under managed care plans in Alameda County, dedicated to promoting health and well being of our community by providing accessible high quality health care. Our individual and organizational commitment is to ensure this human right through quality service, advocacy, and community empowerment
- Everyone is welcome here at TVHC. TVHC is in its 37th year, and we've become affiliated throughout several counties and among many advocacy groups (including the Latino Coalition for a Healthy California and the National Council of La Raza)
- Policy work is often about doing the unthinkable and achieving impossible goals. I would like to extend a special thank you to Assembly Member Torrico for being here, and for fighting these difficult battles on our behalf.

Vanessa Cajina, Regional Networks Coordinator, Latino Coalition for a Healthy California

- Introduction of Assembly Member Alberto Torrico

12:50pm

Keynote Address

The Honorable Alberto Torrico, California State Assembly

- I am pleased to be here and I am particularly impressed to see all of the different organizations that are joined together in this room
- I will try not to bring everyone down or depress everyone with Budget issues, although some discussion is warranted. We have always looked at a "balanced budget" approach to working on the Budget
- Balancing our budget will require both an increase in taxes and a decrease in spending. While Governor Schwarzenegger has cut spending throughout California (a 10% cut across the board, from Health and Human Services, to Education, and so on), all Republicans have signed a promise not to raise taxes. If taxes/ revenue for our state do not increase, California will not achieve a balanced budget.
- Over the past two years, the only tax increase proposed by the Democrats has been the Wilson/ Reagan tax: this would only increase taxes for individuals who make over \$250 million a year (\$500 million for couples). This tax would raise the state's

revenue by billions of dollars, all of which would be used for funding education. While Democrats voted in favor of the tax, there were zero Republicans who voted in favor.

- Democrats in the Legislature face the challenge of convincing Republicans to vote in their favor; and since a 2/3 majority is required for bills/ measures to pass, California *needs* Republicans to vote in favor. On a side note, California, Rhode Island, and Arkansas are *the only* three states which require a 2/3 majority vote; the other 47 States do not face this problem.
- Instead of voting for things like funding for education, Republicans favor tax credits for yacht owners, tax credits for the oil and movie industries. Republicans fight for these credits, and Democrats agree to them in hopes that it will allow Republicans to pass the budget. Yet in the end, Republicans end up not voting at all. So, they accuse Democrats of trying to pass a fiscally irresponsible budget (which they themselves pushed for and then they did not vote on). This is the challenge that Democrats face. And it's the same number every time: 48 Democrats will vote "yes" - 32 Republicans will vote "no"
- Democrats need to show Republicans a fair way of balancing the budget. *Cuts are not the answer!* Cutting COLA/ SSI funding, failing to fund Prop 98, cutting Health and Human Services... will not solve any problems. Republicans are only willing to make cuts, yet they won't find ways to create revenue
- (You, the Public) Shouldn't come to us, talking about cuts. Go to the Republicans and talk about making revenue
- Republicans say you should run a State like you run a business: if you don't have enough money, stop spending. Thus, they are okay with cutting spending from the State budget. However, in a business, you're also always looking for ways to make money. And at home, if you don't have enough money, you get a second job.
- Our vision for California should be to *build people up*; never should we *cut them down*. We should give people the services they need (i.e. health care, etc.)
- Statistics for Latinos:
 - Leading cause of death for Latinos is cardio vascular disease
 - We have a higher incidence of certain cancers
 - We have very high levels of diabetes
- It is easy for you all to come to Sacramento and talk to me. Don't talk to me (I'm with you already! I'm on your side.) Instead, go and talk to my colleagues like Guy Houston. Many will be termed-out in November, and they have nothing to lose by not listening to their constituents. Go and hold them accountable!
- Of the 32% of Latinos eligible to vote in California, only half of them (about 6million Latinos) voted recently. We need for our Latino voice to be heard, so go and vote!
- Go and talk to Republicans in Sacramento, tell them your stories.
- Republicans talk about programs. I talk about "services" and "people"—you should never use the term "program" to talk about services and people. So, go and get your people fired up, do district visits, target these 6 Republicans who refuse to change their votes, tell them they are not representing you and they need to change
- Six Republicans can prevent a fair budget from being passed

Question & Answer:

- Q: Is it realistic to do district visits and talk to Republicans?
- A: Republicans will always tell you “no taxes”. But, they must be held accountable, and they must hear your voice. When the Legislature passed the Budget 52 days late, most of the general public was unaware. The general public did not realize what had happened, and how many services/ people were affected by this late budget. Consequently, the Republicans were never held responsible. This is why you need to do district visits and talk to them.
- Q: Dennis Stewart from the USDA Food Stamp Program informs us that there is \$2 billion available from the Federal Government. The USDA needs LCHC and groups like LCHC to help find *how* to disburse this money adequately. The Latino community is one of the most underserved in this manner. How to we (the USDA) help you access this money for low-income, underserved communities?
- A: We in the Legislature are aware of this funding, and with every dollar that we cut out of the budget, we will lose *another dollar* from federal funding (since the federal government funds us dollar-to-dollar). So we are fighting funding cuts, we are fighting eligibility restraints, and it is very sad to me that we could lose that \$2 billion.
- Q: Vanessa Cajina asks, how many phone calls on an issue would you need to hear, before you pay attention?
- A: 100 Phone calls, we listen. 500 to 1,000 phone calls and we *really* perk up! We will definitely have to raise conversations about the issue if we hear 500 to 1,000.
 - You all should use this strategy to *call* Republicans like Guy Houston.

1:20pm

Member Introductions

Vanessa Cajina, Regional Networks Coordinator, Latino Coalition for a Healthy California

- Today, we have a very diverse room. This is massive that all of us are able to come together, in order to work on fixing our State’s problems. We want to bring you to Sacramento with us, and we want to come here to do district visits. For, we have a very important election coming up in June, as well as in November.
- Member Introductions; our BARN (Bay Area Regional Network) Partners include:
 - Cary Sanders, California Immigrant Policy Center
 - Basil Robledo, Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network
 - Ruby Marquez, Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network
 - Sarah Muller, Working Partnerships USA
- Member Introductions (everyone in room, nearly 40 attendees in total)

1:31pm

Healthcare in el estado dorado: 2007 in review, 2008 in focus

Vanessa Cajina, Latino Coalition for a Healthy California

- Before moving forward, we should look back on 2007, and see from where we’ve come:
 - 2007 was dubbed as “the year of healthcare reform”

- AB 8, the final legislative healthcare reform bill, passed out of the legislature, but was vetoed by Governor in September
- Governor called special session to continue working on the issue
- AB X 1 1, the ultimate proposal adopted by the Assembly was held in the Senate
- Legislators and advocates are looking at staged reforms in response to HCR's failure
- Considering the state's budget deficit, it should be noted that any bills with fiscal appropriations have a slim chance of going anywhere
- 2008 Priority Legislation: Health Disparities
 - AB 2735 (Hernandez), LCHC is sponsoring this bill—it creates a task force to develop a master plan for increasing and diversifying California's healthcare workforce; strengthens data collection and reporting
 - Status: will be heard on April 1 in Assembly health committee and April 9 in Labor and Employment committee- send a letter of support!
 - AB 3027 (De León), LCHC supports—would help inform Limited English Proficient patients of where they could find interpretive services across California's health care system
 - Status: will be heard on April 8 in Assembly Health—Send a letter of support!
- 2008 Priority Legislation: Access to Healthcare
 - SB 564 (Ridley-Thomas), LCHC co-sponsors—would provide the infrastructure needed to expand the number of school health centers and increase access to healthcare services
 - Status: 2 year bill; awaiting next placement
 - SB 32 (Steinberg), LCHC supports—creates health coverage program for ALL California children under 300%fpl and ease enrollment process for Healthy Families/ Medi-Cal
 - Status: 2 year bill, held in Legislature, anwaiting next placement
- 2008 Priority Legislation: Community Health
 - SB 1420 (Padilla), LCHC support—would require specified food facilities (chain restaurants) to provide nutrition information on their menus
 - Status: passed through Senate health, now to Appropriations
 - AB 2572 (Parra), LCHC opposes—would offer restaurants *the option* of disseminating nutritional information through a number of different venues. This bill is supported by the Restaurant Associations, and would block the benefits of SB 1420
 - Status: will be heard in Assembly Health on April 8- send a letter of opposition!
 - AB 2474 (Galgiani) LCHC supports—would require DPH to establish a program that implements recommendations for improvement, including obesity prevention programs/ tracking.
 - Status: will be heard April 8 in Assembly Health—send a letter of support!

- AB 48 (Alquist) LCHC supports—expands and supports healthy retail foods in underserved communities, as well as technical support to existing food retailers to improve food choices
 - Status: 2 year bill; held in Senate Appropriations Committee
- AB 1472 (Leno), LCHC support—establishes the California Healthy Places Act, which would work together to improve environmental health and provide assistance and funding to local governments.
 - Status: 2 year bill; held in Senate Appropriations Committee

Cary Sanders, California Immigrant Policy Center

- Having Our Say Coalition is also tracking several bills. HOS's Tier 1 high priority issue areas include:
 - Opposing the budget cuts
 - Supporting children's coverage expansion (AB 1, Laird/SB 32, Steinberg)
 - Prevention (AB 1472, Leno).
- HOS also has several Tier 2 high priority issue areas on their 2008 Policy Agenda:
 - Workforce Diversity (AB 2375, Hernandez)
 - Coverage Expansion (SB 840, Keuhl)
 - Public Insurer (SB 1622, Simitian)
 - Hospital community benefits (AB 2642, Ma)
 - Mandated Benefits (De la Torre)
 - Transparency (AB 2967)
 - Insurance Oversight
 - AB 1945 (De la Torre)
 - AB 1150 (Lieu)
 - AB 2549 (Hayashi)
 - Individual Insurance Market Reform (SB 1522, Steinberg)
 - Insurance Oversight (AB 1554, Jones)
- HOS Priorities seem like a lot, because there are so many issue areas. Last year's general healthcare reform included all of these issue areas, only it placed them all in one package. Since that package as a whole couldn't pass last year, HOS is hoping to address each area separately, and get them passed little by little.
- For more information about Having Our Say, contact Sarah Mercer at 510-832-1160 or smercer@cpehn.org

1:50pm

Descansito

2:01pm

California's Budget Crisis

Nina Moreno, Children's Defense Fund

- Children's Defense Fund is the oldest and largest national children-focused organization
- CDF is one of three partners of 100% Campaign
- We're sad to see so many budget cuts; We have several fact sheets which show the devastating effects of budget cuts, and the situation, in general, which faces our country's children.

- We must resolve this Budget issue, and find a way to incorporate shared responsibility. We cannot simply make cuts to important programs, and force the burden of balancing the budget onto the backs of children and poor people. Rich people must share this burden as well.
- For more information, or to request one of the Children's Defense Fund publications, contact Nina Moreno: nmoreno@cdfca.org or 510-663-2218

Vanessa Cajina, Latino Coalition for a Healthy California

- Our Budget is in trouble
 - California's budget deficit is structural; many changes need to be made. The Governor had to call an emergency session on the budget to make cuts to the 07-08 budget—leading to emergency cuts in Health and Human Services
 - Rates for Medi-Cal providers were cut 10%... meaning that providers will have to turn away Medi-Cal patients, because it will not be cost effective to serve them.
 - Cash payments to counties were delayed, cutting \$165 million to Medi-Cal Fee for Service
- Some proposed cuts for 08-09:
 - cutting optional benefits for adult Medi-Cal beneficiaries
 - 5% rate reductions to Healthy Families plan
 - Increasing Healthy Families share of cost
 - \$28.3 million decrease to Dept. of Public Health
 - Hundreds of millions in decreases to CalWORKS through a variety of cuts and sanctions

2:12pm

Gloria González, Promotora de Salud, Tiburcio Vasquez Health Center

- *160 personas fueron entrenadas como promotoras de salud en ésta clínica este año.*
- José Joel Garcia mentions the importance of participation/ civic engagement, the Latino community becoming empowered, and the need to vote and make their voices heard: *Una comunidad no puede ser sana sin tener un voto ni una voz*
- *Gloria está aquí para compartir sus experiencias como promotora de salud.*
 - Gloria has been a *promotora* since 2004, and has a background in diabetes and obesity programs
 - Teenage pregnancy is of special interest to her, and she focuses on teaching safe sex to teenagers
 - It is bad enough that when you come to this country that you already have language barriers, but you also have barriers to accessible healthcare. *Resulta: embarazo.* If you don't have access to healthcare, you will not have access to birth control pills or contraceptives.
 - Gloria herself arrived in this country and became pregnant. She did not have health coverage, but was lucky to find the services of Tiburcio Vasquez very helpful. They helped her enroll in coverage, and all of her prenatal expenses were covered.
 - If there are going to be budget cuts, we (the community) need to mobilize and tell people the grim details that they face

- Tiburcio Vasquez Health Centers serve 10,000 people... and they all face cuts in service, etc. This can't happen
- *Prevenir es clave*. It is much better to prevent, than to be cured. We must keep Tiburcio Vasquez and other community centers a vital part of our communities
- Vanessa Cajina: TVHC is a great example of what works in our community. We are happy to support them in any way possible.

2:25pm

Cary Sanders, California Immigrant Policy Center

Basil Robledo, Services, Immigrant Rights and Education Network

- Identifying programs affected by the Budget: the CIPC Budget update and action alert for April 2008 states the following things you can do to get involved:
 - Fax a letter today to committee chairs and legislative leadership: Sen. Ducheny and Asm. Berg.
 - Attend a hearing of the Senate or Assembly Budget Subcommittees on 4/2, 4/7, 4/9, 4/14, or 4/16
- With the current proposed budget cuts, one family can be affected in many ways. Facing cuts to Medi-Cal, Education, CalWORKS, SSI/SSP, Food Stamps, and Citizenship Assistance, a 10% cut across the board can feel like more to a family that submits to two or more of the affected programs.
- Education: As decided in special session, the Legislature has made cuts from this year's education budget. Next year's cuts will reduce funding for PE, class size reduction, preschool education, general childcare services, math, reading and professionals.
- Human Services: SSI/SSP and CalWORKS grants will face cuts in the current year. Cost of living increases will be delayed. It is expected that the cut in SSI/ SSP will affect 3 million senior citizens and persons with disabilities
 - The Governor is proposing to dismantle the Child Safety Net program. In that case, children whose parents are cut will lose coverage at same time (under full family sanctions)
- If you are interested in tracking exactly how many people in your area will be affected by the budget cuts, visit the California Budget Project website: www.cbp.org
 - Alameda County is ranked very high in number of individuals effected
- Cuts to Food Stamp Program: a 10% cut to the Cal Food Assistance Program will cut the administrative caseload by 2.5 million

Basil Robledo, SIREN

- Naturalization Services Program (NSP)
 - SIREN actually provides services through this program
 - NSP began in 1999 and has assisted approximately 100,000 people
 - The Legislative Analyst Office proposed a 30% cut in NSP (rather than the 10% cut applied across the board). This cut would take funding away from the Community Based Organizations that provide naturalization services

- The program served 11,330 residents last year through the arduous process of becoming a US Citizen. As it is, the Citizenship Application is 10 pages long and difficult to fill out. For low-income immigrants, the process is expensive, costing \$650 to file.
- If NSP is cut, residents will have to go elsewhere to find services (resulting in having to pay more to find application assistance, and producing worse results).
- What can you do? Send a letter of support, attend a hearing in Sacramento, contact the California Immigrant Policy Center: phone- (916)448-6742

2:44pm

Introduction of LCHC's new Executive Director, Al Hernández-Santana

¡Digame! Organizing for Budget Equity

- Power of the Pen: sign on to a letter to tell legislators how you feel about this budget!
- Raise your voice: call your Senator or Assemblymember
- Share your stories with other advocates—let us know how this budget hurts your community.

All attendees were then separated into three break-out groups, where they discussed personal affiliations, and shared exactly how the Budget cuts are affecting our families and organizations. These are the stories that our Legislators need to hear.

Jessica Rothhaar, Northern California Organizer, Health Access

- Mapping our assets

Ms. Rothhaar provided a large map of the key Bay Area districts, to discover how we can reach those Legislators' districts. Meeting attendees were asked if they had any family/ friend/ organizational contacts in the area that would be willing to send letters or make calls to the key Legislators. Once mapped out, Ms. Rothhaar provided that she would follow up and ensure that our message gets through!

3:00pm

Adjourn