



1100 K Street
Suite 101
Sacramento
California
95814

Telephone
916.327.7500
Facsimile
916.441.5507

Contact: Steven C. Szalay
CSAC Executive Director
(916) 327-7500

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**COUNTY AND FEDERAL OFFICIALS MEET TO DISCUSS HEALTH AND
WELFARE REFORM IMPACTS TO CALIFORNIA COUNTIES**

Representatives from the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) met with key members of President Clinton's staff earlier this week to discuss health and welfare reforms that directly impact California counties. Attending the meetings were Mike Graves, a San Benito County supervisor and president of CSAC, Francie Sullivan, a Shasta County supervisor and Chair of the CSAC Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Committee, Jim Beall, a Santa Clara County supervisor and Chair of the CSAC Health and Human Services Policy Committee and Steve Szalay, CSAC Executive Director.

The CSAC delegation discussed Medicaid Block Grants, Medicare, Welfare Reform and Solid Waste Flow Control issues during the three-day round of meetings with Leon Panetta, Clinton's Chief of Staff, John Emerson, Deputy Assistant to Clinton for Intergovernmental Relations, Congressman Norm Mineta, Congressman Bill Baker, Senator Barbara Boxer and David Whetmore, Director for Governor Wilson's Office in Washington D.C.

"California counties have met some tough budgetary challenges in the last few years and actions in Washington could have serious implications for our counties' ability to deliver needed health care. We wanted to make sure that the people influencing these decisions heard our voice," said Graves. With most federal actions centering on a shift from entitlement programs to block grants, counties want maximum flexibility and sufficient funding for administering these programs at the local level."

In discussing Medicaid Block Grants, CSAC emphasized that the allocation formula should be adjusted to reflect incidents of poverty and California's unique population. Counties also want federal recognition in the formula for California's reduction in MediCal costs already achieved through managed care programs. "We are expecting an increase in the allocation formula -- currently California receives only \$1,300 per capita in Medicaid funds, while the state of New York receives \$4,700. This imbalance clearly needs to be addressed," commented Beall. CSAC representatives also called for a reasonable means income test to be considered in the debates on Medicare Reform.

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Focusing on welfare reform, CSAC expressed concern that one of the current proposals restricts legal aliens from receiving benefits under AFDC block grants. "The impact to counties could be very significant if the responsibility for the population, who will no longer be eligible for block grants, shifts to counties. This would force counties to divert people to programs such as General Assistance, which is very costly to California counties," said Beall.

"This could have a terrible effect on local General Assistance programs and those affected ultimately are the most needy among our citizens," said Graves. CSAC also stressed the importance of funding childcare and job training programs to transition people back into the workforce.

On another front, counties expressed support for a Solid Waste Flow Control amendment that would allow counties to retain the ability to enter into franchise agreements and to determine the flow of waste to appropriate disposal sites. "We urge a common sense approach on this issue. Counties must have flexibility to determine where and how to dispose of waste. Many counties already operating under severe budget cutbacks don't have funding available to site new waste disposal facilities. It makes good sense to allow local jurisdictions the ability to negotiate agreements that appropriately dispose of waste and that allows for collaborative efforts at problem solving," said Sullivan.

"The next few weeks are critical in the decision making process. Overall, the counties' positions were well received and we expect the administration to address our concerns during the reconciliation process over the next month," said Graves.

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