



Health Care and Social Welfare At the Local Level

Health Care

As Democrats, we believe that health care is a right, not a privilege. Health care belongs to all of us, not solely as citizens of a commonwealth, but also as common members of humanity. When people are in need of healing, it is our responsibility to see that they have it - regardless of ability to pay.

In that spirit, we call upon all members of the Santa Barbara County Democratic Party to dedicate themselves to the cause of universal health care for all. Our fight must be both on the federal and state levels, and in our own community. The necessity of fighting locally as well as nationally stems from the reality that our health care system stands or falls on local networks of care. When people seek healing, the first place they turn to are the local hospitals, health clinics, and doctor's offices throughout Santa Barbara County.

The need for health care is dire and Santa Barbara County's record is worse. Even before the recent downturn, Santa Barbara County already exceeded the statewide average with 29.5% of our people uninsured, shamefully including 16% of all children. As Democrats, we pledge ourselves to fulfill our common obligation to the sick: first, to see that no harm is done, by defeating attempts to cut holes in the safety net; and second, to reform our local health care system so that Santa Barbara County's record on health care can be a source of pride, not shame.

To this end, we call for the following

- Health Care Reserve Budgeting – in devising future budgets, the Board of Supervisors and City Councils (as appropriate) should designate a reserve fund to prevent declines in health care and mental health services funding in recessions, when demand increases as people lose coverage.
- Local Health Care Ordinance – a County-wide ordinance should be established, along the lines of San Francisco's Health Security Ordinance, empowering the County Health Author-

ity to provide comprehensive health services and insurance to the uninsured, and requiring local businesses with 20 or more workers to either provide health insurance to their workers or pay into a health care fund that would finance the CHA's efforts .

- Expanded Health Care Clinics – local health care clinics provide medical care to underserved communities and community residents with limited mobility throughout the county. The health care reserve should be used to protect funds during recessions, lower the caseload for doctors, nurses, technicians, physical therapists, and other health care workers, expand the number of clinics to serve locations currently without clinics, extend hours of business, and improve pay for medical service and home care workers.

Social Welfare

As the heirs of Franklin Roosevelt, Santa Barbara Democrats hold true to the proposition that “*the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little.*” Yet for a generation, California has failed to live up to this challenge. Even before the recession, Santa Barbara County was already a community divided by disturbingly high levels of economic inequality: in a county with nearly twenty thousand million-dollar houses, 14.3% of Santa Barbara County residents live in poverty, and a full third of us occupy the ranks of the near poor. As the current recession worsens, the gap between the rich and the rest will only grow.

As people across our community feel the effects of a recession, their first and last line of defense against destitution are our local social services. It is precisely at times like the present, when recession forces mass layoffs and the resulting loss of benefits and salaries that the need for an active and caring government is most clear. What is needed now is more spending, to provide adequate support for all who need it, pump purchasing power back into our local economies, and to put the unemployed back to work.

As Democrats, we pledge ourselves to fight back against social service cuts that target the poor, the unemployed, the elderly, the disabled, and children in need. To go beyond this defensive aim, we call for the following:

- Social Welfare & Job Bank Reserve Budgeting – in devising future budgets, the County Board of Supervisors and city councils should designate a reserve fund, similar to the health care fund proposed above, to prevent declines in social services, and to fund public works and job programs during recessions, when the need for social services and jobs expands.