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READER'S EDITORIALS: A WIN FOR SENIORS AND THEIR FAMILIES IN CALIFORNIA

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A Major Win for all Californians: What you need to know about the Elder Economic

Planning Act of 2011

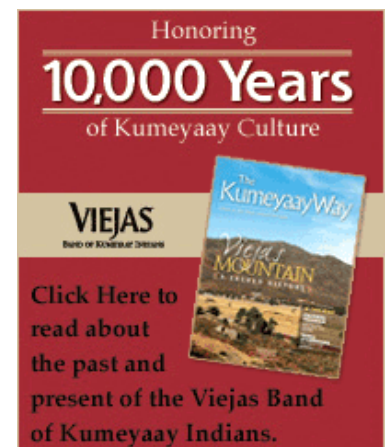
by Paul Downey, CEO & President, Senior Community Centers, San Diego

November 10, 2011 (San Diego)--We all aspire to age and with age we all hope to be able to provide ourselves with the basic needs to simply survive – home, food, health care, transportation, etc. However, this is not the case for all seniors. Many struggle to get by daily and though they may have saved in their youth, unforeseen circumstances can turn almost anyone's lives upside down.

In October, all Californians received a major win as Governor Jerry Brown signed the Elder Economic Planning Act of 2011 (AB 138) requiring the use of the Elder Economic Security Standard Index (Elder Index), rather than the antiquated Federal Poverty Level (FPL) guidelines, so local Area Agencies on Aging can more appropriately plan

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services and programs for local seniors. AB 138 provides a better measure of senior poverty through the Elder Index, a new tool that accurately quantifies the annual cost of meeting basic needs for retired, older adults in each county throughout the state of California.

California leads the nation with more than 300,000 seniors living below the FPL. Additionally, more than 864,000 California seniors do not have enough income to cover their most basic needs. Previously, local Area Agencies on Aging were forced to rely on the antiquated FPL which was created in the mid-1960's and was solely based on the cost of a bare-bones food diet, and covered less than half of the basic costs experienced by adults age 65 and older in the state. FPL did not provide an accurate, local picture of economic needs for seniors and as a result agencies ended up with inconsistent alternatives to assess poverty in their communities. This lack of uniformity was not only inefficient, but also more costly and less effective since many agencies were having to conduct their own expensive research.

AB 138 does not require California to spend additional money updating the Elder Index and already supplies information on senior living costs on a county-by-county basis. As the senior population continues to grow, it is crucial that we plan and take the necessary steps to provide accurate levels of poverty for our seniors.

The passing of the Elder Economic Planning Act of 2011 was a long time coming and a team effort by aging agencies throughout our state, as well as the voices of many California seniors and advocates. With the new Elder Index baseline, low-income seniors will be able to have their needs more realistically assessed and most importantly their basic needs will be met.

Founded in 1970, Senior Community



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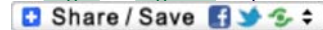
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Centers is a nonprofit agency transforming the aging experience for San Diego seniors through nutrition, health and wellness services, advocacy and transitional and supportive housing that increase the quality of life for seniors living in poverty and allowing them to live independently for as long as possible. The organization has been led for more than 16 years by Chief Executive Officer and President Paul Downey, who is also the president of the National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs and the California Nutrition Coalition. For more information including volunteer opportunities or more information, please visit www.servingseniors.org, or call [\(619\) 487-0743](tel:6194870743).

The opinions expressed in this editorial reflect the views of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of East County Magazine. To submit an editorial for consideration, contact editor@eastcountymagazine.org.

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- All February 2010 Articles
- All January 2010 Articles
- All December 2009 Articles
- All November 2009 Articles
- All October 2009 Articles
- All September 2009 Articles
- All August 2009 Articles
- All July 2009 Articles
- All June 2009 Articles
- All May 2009 Articles
- All April 2009 Articles
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