

Press Release
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New Law Will Improve Medi-Cal for California Workers with Disabilities

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger of California signed AB 1269 into law just a few hours before the legal deadline on October 11, 2009. Staff for the bill's author, Assemblymember Julia Brownley (Santa Monica), informed the bill's sponsor, World Institute on Disability, WID, shortly after the bill became law.

California residents who work and use Medi-Cal services reacted swiftly.

"The changes made by this law will finally allow thousands of Californians with significant disabilities to go to work without jeopardizing vital health care that is not available under employer-sponsored health insurance, or Medicare coverage," declared Alana Theriault, Director of Benefits Planning for Abilicorp, a disability-focused employment company.

"AB 1269 improves Medi-Cal's California Working Disabled Program by allowing disabled workers such as myself to be able to save our earnings and plan for our future like everyone else. We now have 26 weeks in-between jobs during which we can stay on Medi-Cal through this program without penalty as long as we keep paying our premiums. I am especially happy that this program will no longer exclude disabled people on retirement benefits who will now have more opportunity to make a living in this difficult economy. Californians with disabilities have a real world employment support with this law," concluded Ms. Theriault.

The Gray Panthers, AARP and other major senior organizations urged the Governor to sign AB 1269. Because of federal restrictions in spending guidelines, the new law takes effect shortly after Medi-Cal no longer receives federal Stimulus Act funds, about a year from now.

"Californians with a significant disability are taking big hits this year with major cuts to available social services," stated Bryon MacDonald at WID. "Terrific California advocates, employees, business owners and non profit groups worked with WID for years on AB 1269. AB 1269 becoming law in difficult times for so many of us represents an indomitable spirit in the disability community that we shall not only survive these hard times, we plan to thrive in spite of them."