

LIFETIME Newsflash!

*CalWORKs families deliver message to Governor with children's shoes:
Budget Cuts Will Leave Our Children Barefoot!*



On Monday, as the Big Five met inside the Governor's office, more than 100 LIFETIME children and parents held a noisy protest outside in the hall, to demand that policymakers protect poor children in the 2009-2010 state budget. The action was the culmination of LIFETIME's annual Parent Leadership Summit, where low-income parents and children come from all over

California to learn about policy issues that affect their families, help determine LIFETIME's policy priorities for the year, develop their leadership skills and organize an action that will raise awareness of the challenges low-income parents face in their efforts to finish school, so they can graduate off welfare and out of poverty for good.

At this year's summit, the families who participated were pioneers, launching a youth program, with 15-year old Jasmine Hain leading the effort - a dream she's had since first testifying at a state budget hearing at the age of nine. At the summit, our young leaders developed and ran their own leadership activities, and worked with their parents to organize a press conference and action to make their families' voices heard on the state budget. Families traveled from as far north as Yuba County, and as far south as San Diego, to be part of this important event.

The focus of this year's summit was the state budget, and the Governor's proposal to cut more than 220,000 children off CalWORKs - one of every four children receiving assistance in California - to help solve the state's fiscal crisis. The Governor's budget proposal also includes 10% cuts to CalWORKs cash grants that are already more than 50% below the poverty line, and that average only \$723 a month for a family of three. If passed, this measure will push more than 1.2 million low-income parents and children deeper into poverty. Since these proposals target poor children, Youth Leaders were asked to lead the press conference, and they did a fantastic job selecting and preparing their speakers, all of whom will be directly affected by the CalWORKs cuts the Governor has proposed.

LIFETIME Youth who spoke at the event included Alexa Alvarez-Segundo (13), Prince Ajoni Bason (16), and Jenesis Hayes (14), who shared stories of how their parents already struggle to make ends meet. Alexa described how her mother, a nursing student at Merritt College, can't afford to buy milk or cheese by the third week of the month for her and her younger brother. "When my mom doesn't have money for food, it makes me sad." Darrell Kitchen (14) gave an emotional speech about how the CalWORKs cuts would make times even harder for his family, bringing reporters present to tears. Interviews with our youth leaders were featured in

television broadcasts in Sacramento and the Bay Area, and in four print articles spanning from Sacramento to Los Angeles.

Afterwards, LIFETIME parent leaders marched with their children to the Capitol, where they delivered their children's outgrown shoes to the Governor, as well as key members of the Assembly and Senate budget committees, to symbolize who the proposed CalWORKs cuts will hurt. A protest erupted after parent leaders saw members of the Big Five enter the Governor's office, and began chanting in the hall. The noisy protest brought state police, as well as key members of the Governor's staff, who agreed to meet with a delegation of LIFETIME parent leaders and children. In the 45-minute meeting, the LIFETIME crew talked with Bismark Obando, Schwarzenegger's Director of External Affairs, and Richard Figueroa, his Deputy Cabinet Secretary, about how the proposed CalWORKs cuts would affect their families. Figueroa assured the families that he would share their concerns with his boss, but he wasn't optimistic, explaining that "the state has a \$42 billion dollar hole to fill." But as LIFETIME parent leader Jewnbug Strohl in cautioned, her son Solomon in her lap, "Just don't fill it with our children." As the meeting ended, Lakisha Neal, LIFETIME Parent Organizer, gave Figueroa a small pair of baby's shoes for the Governor, to remind him who will be hurt if the proposed cuts are passed.

With unemployment rates in California at a 16-year high, the timing of the Governor's budget proposal could not be worse. A recent study by the California Budget Project found that as the economy worsens, welfare rolls are already rising. At a time of such economic uncertainty, this budget will shred the safety net at a time when California families will need it the most.

As the budget process moves forward, LIFETIME will continue to make sure these budget cuts don't leave poor children in California barefoot.



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LIFETIME Action News Coverage:

["Welfare Recipients Protest Proposed Cuts," News10 ABC Sacramento](#)

["Budget Talks Set As Key Speech Looms," KCRA3 Sacramento](#)

["Protestors Rally Against the Budget," NBC Bay Area](#)

["Budget Talks Set As Key Speech Looms," KSBW Action 8 Central Coast](#)

["California Imploding: Budget Proposals Say Goodbye to Public Transit & Shortens the School Year," LAist](#)

["Inconformidad por cortes en CalWorks," La Opinión](#)



LIFETIME would like to thank all our donors for their generous support of our Parent Leadership Summit.