

**“HOW’S YOUR HEALTH?”**  
**A speech by SEIU 434B President Tyrone Freeman to Ca. State Legislators**

I’m Tyrone Freeman, President of SEIU Local 434b, with a message from 120,000 California Long Term Care Workers. And another 340,000 Californians relying on In Home Supportive Services to live safe. And sanely.

Yes that’s right. I stand before you as one man with the voice of almost ½ million people.

But before I get to that, I’d like to ask each of you, Madame Chairman and Senators... (LEAN IN) how’s your health?

(Pause to see if they respond. Madame? Senator \_\_\_\_\_. And you Senator \_\_\_\_\_ - feeling good today? Address each of them singularly.)

You know, I’m glad to hear it. Because not everyone your age is looking and feeling as good as you are this morning.

In fact, I wonder how the governor’s feeling these days. Oh, I know there was a time when he was in good health – great shape even, as Mr. Universe. And here’s an updated picture of the Governor on the cover of Southern California Senior Life magazine (hand them prop). You gotta admit... he’s looking real happy smoking that big cigar.

But it makes you wonder.... Is this a senior who’s interested in **his** health?

(PAUSE)

Well, what I’m here to tell you is: **WE ARE.** (BIG SMILE)

Now, when I say we I mean myself and the 200 people you see behind me. And the 100 others standing in the overflow rooms to your left and right.... I think all of us left at 2:30AM — in the middle of the night — to get here on time this morning.

And the hundreds of thousands in our network those, like the Governor, are working and couldn’t be here in person.

Because at SEIU, we're that hungry for good health, you see. We have a vested interest in the governor's health and the health of California's other ½ million citizens who need Long Term Care.

And when I say citizens, I mean seniors the governor's age for instance. And the disabled... like Christopher Reeves... one minute the star of Superman movies was as alert alive and well as (POINT TO EACH OTHER) **you and I.**

Heck, he couldn't just walk across this room, he was a sportsman – he could run circles around me. (Be walking... like a lawyer...)

Then, in the blink of an eye, (SNAP) that wasn't the case anymore was it? The man had a broken neck. What's interesting about it is... after his accident, a ventilator kept him breathing. A wheelchair kept him moving.

**But his wife kept him alive.**

Did you know that? For nine years, Christopher Reeve's wife Dana was a Long Term Care Worker.....I wonder... which of your family members will be YOUR long term care worker one day? And when will that day be? In 10 years? Five? A few months perhaps?

Or maybe, like Christopher Reeves, in an instant?

But then, what if you don't have a family member who can lift you? I mean pick you up? Carry you from the bed to the bath? Where would you go and who could you depend on for quality care?

**How much would your life be worth to you then?**

**Would it be worth a penny less to you then in this instant, right now?**

**How much would it be worth to a California State Senator?**

**How much is the life of a senior citizen worth right now?**

(LOOK AROUND THE ROOM)

Let's see....More than ten million adult Americans need help today with such basics as bathing and dressing, preparing meals and other activities of daily living. Do you know what it's like to sit in a chair for hour and hours, just waiting for someone to feed you?

Many more need educated nursing attention. And with the percentage of senior citizens expected to increase sharply - a full 50% by the year 2020 - - from 35.5 million in 2000 to 52.6 million, the **demand for home health services can only go (RAISE ARM) up up up.**

So, Senators, why does the Governor want the wages of California's Long Term and Home Care Health Workers to go **down down down?**

(PAUSE)

**Rollback** may make sense for Wal-mart shoppers, (SMILE) but you've got rows of statistics, (POINT) big pie charts, graphs, graphics, number signs, dollar signs and everything else you could possible need – and probably more – all right there in our extensive research paperwork.

**That shows in black and white how these cuts kill.**

Think about it. There is no one **thing** on this planet that can keep a person alive. Quality life takes nurturing. That's a God-given gift that only one human being can give to another.

In that paperwork, You can **see** the terms of the wage, health and benefits rollbacks:

The destruction of body, mind and soul. To whom?

**To anyone the hand of a Long Term Home and Health Care Worker touches.**

How many hands can that be? And how many people are they touching? Can you feel it?

(PAUSE)

I haven't even mentioned the children.

Thirty-five years ago, Governor Ronald Reagan put into law the Lanterman Act covering California's children and adults with disabilities. As you know, that means they get to use In Home Supportive Services as provided by the state.

Well, at least until today.

But I want to make you aware of another number of years that you probably aren't as familiar with. And that's eleven. **Eleven** is how many years California's Long Term, Home and Health Care Workers did (HOLD UP INDEX FINGER) one thing.

What was that **ONE** thing? We fought for better wages. Have **you** ever done one thing – day in and day out for eleven years? Just like the non-stop time, energy, attention and tender loving care our skilled people give, keeping Californians alive.... We did something for ourselves.

And now the Governor wants to take it all away. In a single heartbeat.

Just like Christopher Reeves... (EXTEND OPEN PALMS) only this wouldn't be a freak accident would it?

(PAUSE)

So I'm only going to give you **One** statistic from that big stack – I trust you to read the rest. And here it is:

If home care workers' wages in Los Angeles County fall – if you let the Governor engage in 'rollback'

**90% of your home care workers have said they cannot continue to work as an IHSS provider.**

**Cut the wages = lose 90% of the workforce.**

So what happens to our state's seniors?

Hmmmmm....

**Senators, I'm going to close with my opening question.**

**How's your health?**

**Indeed.... I support you in asking your constituents the bigger question:  
“How's your Health California?”**

At S-E-I-U, we want to know.

Thank you.

**FINI**