



October 22, 2009

A Reprieve for California Shelters

By [JESSE MCKINLEY](#)

SAN FRANCISCO — In a reversal, Gov. [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#) signed a stopgap bill on Wednesday to restore financing to the California's shelters for victims of domestic violence.

Mr. Schwarzenegger eliminated money for the shelters in late July with [a line-item veto](#) as the state struggled to close the remainder of a \$24 billion budget hole. The veto stripped the 94 nonprofit groups that run the state's shelters of about \$200,000, causing most to curtail services and a few to close altogether.

Mr. Schwarzenegger said he had never wanted to cut domestic violence programs but was forced to by the Legislature's inability to give him a fully balanced budget.

On Wednesday, however, his message was more positive, praising the stopgap bill as a "creative solution to keep these shelters open," adding that the state needed to find permanent funding solution for the programs.

The bill he signed is not a permanent fix but rather a loan, diverting \$16.3 million from an alternative fuel and technology fund to the state general fund. That money must be repaid by June 2013. It also places administration of the domestic violence program with the state's emergency management agency instead of the Department of Public Health, which had overseen financing of such programs since their inception in 1994.

Camille Hayes, a spokeswoman for the [California Partnership to End Domestic Violence](#), which lobbies on behalf the state's shelters, said the bill was "positive news in the sense that it's a step in the right direction."

But she cautioned that the money might not be available in time to prevent further closings or to potentially reopen shelters which have closed. She also said new legislation would need to be written to ensure domestic violence financing continues past this fiscal year.

"This is only a one-year fix," Ms. Hayes said. "And this is a pretty big ship we're asking to turn."

In the face of the cuts, many shelters across the state had already cut services, including reducing the number of beds, eliminating legal counseling, and laying off staff members.

State Senator Leland Yee, a San Francisco Democrat who had fought for the restoration of funding, added to the chorus of bittersweet praise, saying in a statement that while he was pleased Mr. Schwarzenegger had signed the bill, "I am still dismayed that he would put women and children at risk in the first place."

[Copyright 2009 The New York Times Company](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)