

Letter: EDC takes issue with column

To the community,

Re: Seniors get shaft in EDC budget (**Opinion, June 1, 2017**), the following misleading information presented as fact must be put right.

Paragraph 1: “....a program that is funded about 65 percent by the county, and by about 35 percent private donations and a small federal government grant.”

Clarification: Senior Legal receives approximately \$80,000 in donations each year and approximately \$250,000 in general fund money.

Paragraph 2: “This program provides direct legal services to seniors in landlord/tenant issues/estate questions/elder abuse/long-term care planning and protecting seniors from being taken advantage of. The service is now offered without charge.”

Clarification: Information that is relevant but not included is that these services are provided without any verification of the individual’s ability to pay for the services. Data relative to the income of senior legal clients has been requested, but not provided, and due to attorney client privilege, even if this information is available, county administration is unable to access the information directly. Taxpayer money may well be going to fund free legal services to wealthy seniors who are able to pay.

Paragraph 3: “....there are no position cuts to county administration.”

Correction: The recommended budget includes a net county cost reduction of approximately 8.2 percent within the general government functional group, which is primarily county

administration. In addition, many high level administrative positions in the Community Development Agency, including the CDA director, assistant director of finance and administration, administrative secretary, administrative services officer and senior department analyst, have been cut from the budget, with all of the work being absorbed by other staff. The Chief Administrative Office is absorbing most of this work without any increases to net county cost.

Paragraph 5: "The programs that provide direct service to clients are the first ones to have their budgets reduced or cut, while overhead costs to these programs continually go up, often due to increased administrative costs."

Clarification: In FY 2014-15, shortly after the creation of the Health and Human Services Agency, the administrative overhead rate was 36 percent. This rate has declined the last several years and in the fiscal year 2017-18 recommended budget it is 27 percent, a 9 percent decrease.

Paragraph 8: "At this point, adding administrative positions is a mistake. The costly creation of agency level administrative positions is a principal reason senior services are in jeopardy."

Clarification: The Health and Human Services Agency is adding an assistant director of administration and finance position, but deleting a chief assistant director position. The salaries of each position are identical so there is no increase to the budget. Instead it is simply replacing one executive level administrative position that had a clinical focus, with an executive level finance position due to the complexity of the funding streams in HHSA and to better compliment (sic) the skill set of the director.

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