

Letter: Making a case for senior legal services

Publisher's note: *This letter was sent to the El Dorado County Board of Supervisors on June 15, 2017.*

Dear Board of Supervisors,

As the chair of Friends of Seniors, a local nonprofit under the El Dorado Community Foundation, I have become familiar with the excellent senior services we have in El Dorado County, and the incredibly dedicated staff who run the programs. There is a wide variety of services, housed together, aimed at protecting the health and well-being of seniors.

The coordination of these services has created a safety net for the elderly that has resulted in fast responses to meet the needs of seniors, both on a daily basis and in a crisis. Even seniors who have never needed the services should feel comfort, knowing they are available.

Yes, we may be the only county in California that has our own senior legal program, but that is something we should be proud of. The coordination of that service, with other senior services the county provides, serves the needs of our ever-growing senior population.

In comparing El Dorado County with other counties, we must realize they, in turn, have programs and services we don't have.

In 2016 El Dorado County ranked 29 out of 58 California counties in terms of population. With 28 percent of our population being seniors, we ranked 16 out of 58 counties in terms of percent of seniors aged 60+. The California State Plan on Aging predicts that by 2030 El Dorado County will see an 83 percent increase in the number of seniors aged 60+. UC

San Francisco's Institute for Health and Aging and the Alzheimer's Association released a report in 2009 predicting that El Dorado County will see a 142 percent increase in the number of patients with Alzheimer's Disease by 2030, the steepest rise in our region.

If the El Dorado County Senior Legal Program were to be removed out of the county's budget, our vulnerable seniors would never be served in the same manner, and many would never be served at all. By protecting the health of seniors, it protects the health of the community, and saves the county money in other areas. In addition senior legal staff holds workshops and seminars throughout the county to senior groups, county volunteers and the general public on topics pertinent to the health and well-being of seniors. I hope you will take the time to hear from the staff who run senior legal about the many significant facets of the program.

The senior legal program is very cost effective; \$50,000 comes from the Older Americans Act, and in the last 12 months, the program has received \$95,000 in donations. This leaves a balance of \$268,000 to come out of the county budget; \$268,000 out of a budget of \$280,000,000.

El Dorado County is a very special place to live. We have a reputation both for excellent schools for our children, and outstanding services for our seniors. It is important that we do what we can to maintain what we have.

Sincerely,

Kathi Lishman, chair Friends of Seniors