

CDCAN REPORT

CALIFORNIA DISABILITY COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK ADVOCACY WITHOUT BORDERS: ONE COMMUNITY REPORT #135-2009 MAY 8, 2009 – EARLY FRIDAY

California Disability Community Action Network Disability Rights News goes out to over 45,000 people with disabilities, mental health needs, seniors, veterans with disabilities and mental health needs, their families, workers, community organizations, including those in Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino, African American communities, policy makers and others across California. To reply to this report write: MARTY OMOTO at martyomoto@rcip.com <<mailto:martyomoto@rcip.com>> Website: www.cdcan.us <www.cdcan.us>

California Legislature:

Sam Blakeslee New Assembly Republican Leader – Will Take Over June 1

Blakeslee Highly Regarded by Many People With Disabilities In San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties – Authored “Warren Mattingly Signature Stamp Act”

SACRAMENTO, CALIF (CDCAN) [Updated 05/08/09 06:00 AM (Pacific Time) - Assemblymember Sam Blakeslee (Republican – San Luis Obispo) was chosen Thursday by the 29 Assembly Republicans as their new Assembly Republican Leader to replace Assemblymember Mike Villines (Republican – Clovis, 29th District). Blakeslee [pictured in April 2008 photo] will take over June 1st.

Both Blakeslee and Villines are termed out of the Assembly in 2010. Villines said that he was not being forced out – but it was known that members of the Assembly Republican caucus were not happy with his support of a budget deal in February that included raising – even temporarily – taxes and fees to help balance what was then a projected \$42 billion budget shortfall.

During the budget talks that month, Senate Republicans ousted their leader, Sen. Dave Cogdill (Republican – Fresno, 14th District), who supported that budget deal, replacing him with Sen. Dennis Hollingsworth (Republican – Murrieta, 36th District. An attempt at the same time to oust Villines failed.

Blakeslee Will Play Key Role In Budget Crisis

His elevation as Assembly Republican Leader will make the San Luis Obispo Republican one of the “Big Five” that includes the Governor, Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (Democrat – Sacramento, 6th District), Assembly Speaker Karen Bass (Democrat – Los Angeles, 47th District) and Senate Republican Leader Dennis Hollingsworth (Republican – Murrieta, 36th District). The “Big Five” , especially in recent budget years, have met in private and crafted the budget deals.

Democrats control both houses of the State Legislature. In the 80 member Assembly Democrats hold 51 seats, with Republicans holding 29. In the 40 member State Senate, Democrats hold 24 seats (with one vacancy), and Republicans hold 15.

Disability Advocates in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Praise Blakeslee

Disability advocates in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties, who have worked with Blakeslee since his election to office in 2004 on various state and local issues, including 2007 legislation titled the “Warren Mattingly Signature Stamp Act”, widely praised him for being attentive and supportive

Some statewide disability and senior advocates also praised Blakeslee, remembering when he was a member of the Assembly Budget Subcommittee #1 on Health and Human Services in 2005 when he voted against cuts that would have reduced funding for IHSS worker wages during the 2005-2006 State Budget year.

In later years Blakeslee supported spending reductions to help close the budget deficit including cuts to programs that serve people with disabilities – but advocates, especially those in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara counties praised him for what they said was his integrity and “willingness to be open and to listen”.

Statement Released By Blakeslee:

"I am honored to have the support and confidence of my colleagues. I have spoken with the Assembly Speaker as well as the Governor. I have pledged to work with them toward restoring a vibrant and growing California economy and a fiscally sound state government.

"California has always been on the forefront of job and business growth. For years we've set the standard as the best place in America to raise a family and build a business. I believe we can get there again.

"We will fight for fiscally sound state government so that we can withstand the lean times and prosper in the good times. We will fight to reform and streamline government so that it can provide services at an affordable price. We will fight for high performing schools and safe streets in which our children can play. We will fight for a healthy business climate that encourages entrepreneurship and creates head-of-household jobs.

"Our team is looking forward to working with everyone in the legislature to find responsible solutions that balance California's budget and returns prosperity to our communities."

Background of Assemblymember Blakeslee

The 33rd Assembly district which Blakeslee represents includes the communities of Santa Maria, San Luis Obispo, Lompoc, Atascadero, Paso Robles, Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Pismo Beach, and Guadalupe.

- Elected to represent the 33rd Assembly District in November of 2004, winning his seat by a 24 point margin of victory. Re-elected in 2006 with 67% of the vote and again in 2008 with 64%.
- Blakeslee’s office says that during his first year in office, he had more bills signed into law than any other freshman Republican. In his second year, he had more bills signed into law than any Republican Assemblymember. Last session (2007-2008) Assemblyman Blakeslee had more bills signed into law than any Republican in either the Assembly or State Senate.
- Education: graduated from San Luis Obispo High School and then began a career in construction. Attended Cuesta Community College. Later earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in geophysics from UC Berkeley and a Ph.D. from UC Santa Barbara for his research in seismic scattering, micro-earthquake studies, and fault-zone attenuation. He is published in numerous scientific journals.

- Worked as a research scientist at Exxon's research lab in Texas, where he received a patent for inventing an innovative technique that used medical cat-scan technology to create detailed images of geologic formations. He later moved into management where he was responsible for creating and managing Exxon budgets.
- Upon returning to the Central Coast, Blakeslee assumed the role of President of the family business, the investment firm Blakeslee & Blakeslee, which was founded in 1971 and served on various boards, including being elected as a member of the Cuesta Community College Board of Trustees.
- Co-chaired San Luis Obispo's Housing Task Force which helped craft a city housing element that earned a state award for enabling more affordable housing.
- Married to Kara and has three children and lives in San Luis Obispo.

Background of the Warren Mattingly Signature Stamp Act – AB 18

Assemblymember Blakeslee after hearing from San Luis Obispo area advocates for people with disabilities regarding problems in use of signature stamps for voting purposes, introduced in late 2006, AB 18 that addressed the issue.

AB 18 established the “Warren Mattingly Signature Stamp Act”, which allows a person with disabilities, who is unable to write, to use a signature stamp to sign a document whenever a signature is required by an elections-related document, including voter registration and absentee ballots. For a copy of the bill:

http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/07-08/bill/asm/ab_0001-0050/ab_18_bill_20071011_chaptered.html

The issue of signature stamps for people who cannot sign their own name, came up in October 2006 during a CDCAN Townhall Telemeeting that focused on issues related to voting by people with disabilities, mental health needs and seniors that featured then Secretary of State Bruce McPherson and several county registrar of voters who answered questions from several hundreds of people across the state.

The issue of signature stamps and the need for people with disabilities – especially those with developmental disabilities – was pushed earlier by Warren Mattingly of San Luis Obispo, who came up to the State Capitol to testify against budget cuts for service for persons with disabilities and also about voter rights of people with disabilities. Mattingly was an early supporter and organizer with CDCAN and a leader of the San Luis Obispo People First chapter and a board member of the Tri-Counties Regional Center. He passed away unexpectedly in May 2006.

Blakeslee was saddened by the news of Mattingly’s death, and went to great lengths to get an Assembly resolution that honored his life in time to be presented during his funeral in San Luis Obispo – and effort that moved Mattingly’s family and friends. Blakeslee months later after hearing of the signature stamp issue from San Luis Obispo advocates, wanted to push a bill to resolve the problems and that would allow a person with disabilities to use a signature stamp for voting purpose – and name the bill after Warren Mattingly.

The bill passed the State Senate by a vote of 34 to 1 (then Sen. McClintock opposing it) on September 10, 2007 and a final vote in the Assembly on September 11, 2007 by a vote of 77 to 0. The Governor Schwarzenegger signed the bill on October 11, 2007 and the bill went into effect on January 1, 2008 – in time for the historic elections that year. .