

High Court blesses welfare benefits for new residents

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — A U.S. Supreme Court ruling that thwarts state plans to provide lower welfare payments to new residents is a welcome message to the needy, advocates for the poor say.

"California and other states now can take down their 'Poor People Keep Out' signs," said Mark Rosenbaum of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California. The court's 7-2 decision last Monday dashed the plans of California and 14 other states, and was a defeat

for Congress and the Clinton administration.

Ruling in a case involving three newly arrived California residents, the court said the state's desire to limit their welfare payments would violate their constitutional right to travel. Although the word "travel" is not in the Constitution, the freedom to move from one state to another has long been considered a bedrock right.

"The state's legitimate interest in saving money provides no justification for its decision to discriminate

among equally eligible citizens," Justice John Paul Stevens wrote for the court.

"Citizens of the United States, whether rich or poor, have the right to choose to be citizens of the state wherein they reside," he said.

California's policy, enacted in 1992 but never enforced because of lower court rulings, would have given people who lived in the state for less than a year only the amount of welfare they would have received in their previous home state.

For example, a mother and

one child are eligible for \$456 a month in California but only \$275 in neighboring Arizona. The policy would have limited the California monthly benefits to \$275 for such a family's first year in the state.

The ruling was unlikely to have a major effect on state budgets, state officials said.

In California, the law was aimed at trimming roughly \$11 million from the state's \$2.9 billion annual welfare budget. Gov. Gray Davis, who supported the law, nonetheless had budgeted the

money for this year in case the high court ruled the way it did. "I'm not wild about the ruling, but I don't think it's going to create a problem," Davis said.

In New York, Jack Madden, a spokesman for the state Office of Temporary Disability Assistance, said a similar law has been on the books for several years but was never implemented because of questions about its legality.

The ruling is unlikely to mean an increase for many Georgia recipients because

the state's benefits are among the nation's lowest, said Joyce Goldberg of the Georgia Department of Human Resources. Georgia provides up to \$280 per month for a family of three.

In the California case, three women had moved to the state to escape abusive family situations in Louisiana, Oklahoma and Colorado. The lawsuit said the limits on their benefits, coupled with California's high cost of living, could deprive them of the basic necessities of life.

County Commission approves initial substation plan

John T. Stephens III
Sentinel-Voice

The Clark County Commission recently approved a Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department funding plan to build a new police training facility in the Northwest as well as five new substations, including one in West Las Vegas.

The plan must now pass Las Vegas City Council muster.

"This has to do with fighting crime and is a very



GARY REESE

positive thing," Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates said. "Crime is one of the biggest issues expressed by my constituents."

Enterprise Park, near Martin Luther King Boulevard and Owens Avenue is slated for the 17,000 square-foot facility that would house between 150-175 employees. The approximate cost of the capital improvement plan is in the neighborhood of \$20 million dollars.



ATKINSON-GATES

"Its (capital improvement plan) a good thing for the community," said Doug Bradford, director of public communications for Clark County. "It spreads out the police resources that they (LVMPD) currently have."

"People feel much safer if there is a high police visibility," said Las Vegas City Councilman Gary Reese. Reese is seeking re-election to Ward 3 district where the new substation is proposed. "We have neighborhoods that want a police presence."

Gates and Reese said their constituents are concerned with crime and wanted the police substation despite recent complaints from Clark County residents about too many incidents of excessive force.

"If you have people breaking the law that will strain any (public) relations," Reese said. "It (substation) can't stop all crime, but would definitely make criminals go elsewhere."

"This should cut down crime in the area," Gates said.

Voters to decide size of council

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A senator's dogged pursuit of a larger City Council to boost representation and increase minority governmental presence has paid off.

A question asking voters whether they want to expand the size of the council — and thus the wards — from four to six seats is part of the June 8 general election ballot.

Each council member has 112,000 constituents on average. Should the measure pass, that average would drop

to 77,000. Presently, 448,244 residents live in the city.

State Sen. Joe Neal, D-North Las Vegas champions expansion and said the addition of two seats could increase the likelihood that minorities are elected to the board. Frank Hawkins and Ken Brass are the only African-Americans ever elected to the council. No Hispanic has ever been elected.

In 1997, Neal sponsored legislation that would have

forced the city to expand its council. It was watered down and only approved accommodations for growth.

A resident committee convened by the council recommended expansion and asked the council to place the item on the general election ballot as an advisory-only question.

The Legislature recently passed a Neal-sponsored bill requiring the outcome of the question to be binding on the council.

Group to honor African-American seniors

Sentinel-Voice

The Black Community Organization Network will be hosting a baccalaureate program honoring African-American graduating seniors 3 p.m. Sunday, May 30 at Second Baptist Church, 500 Madison Ave.

Commemorative medallions will be

given to each student for obtaining their diplomas.

Graduates are encouraged to bring their caps and gowns to participate and family and friends are welcome.

The event is free.

Those interested can call Karen Williams at 779-7725.

CORRECTIONS

Due to a reporting error in the May 13 issue, the Uncle Phatbeats party was misidentified. The weekend party was the fifth event hosted by Strickly Flavor.

Due to an editing error, Kimberly Edwards did not receive photo credit on Ginuwine concert photos on pages 1, 8 and 9.

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