

County of Sonoma Agenda Item Summary Report			Clerk of the Board Use Only Meeting Date ____/____/____ Agenda Item No: _____	
Department: Board of Supervisors			<input type="checkbox"/> 4/5 Vote Required	
Contact: Supr Shirlee Zane	Phone: (707) 565-2241	Board Date: 9/1/09	Deadline for Board Action:	
AGENDA SHORT TITLE: Resolution to support Assembly Bill 324 (Beall) - Aging: Elder Economic Security Standard Index				
REQUESTED BOARD ACTION: Approve resolution to support Assembly Bill 324 (Beall) - Aging: Elder Economic Security Standard Index				
CURRENT FISCAL YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT				
<u>EXPENDITURES</u>			<u>ADDL FUNDS REQUIRING BOARD APPROVAL</u>	
Estimated Cost	\$	000.00	Contingencies (Fund Name:)	\$ 000.00
Amount Budgeted	\$	000.00	Unanticipated Revenue (Source:)	\$ 000.00
Other Available Approp. (Explain Below)	\$	000.00	Other Transfer(s) (Source:)	\$ 000.00
Additional Requested:	\$	0.00	Total Source of Funds:	\$ 0.00
Explanation (if required):				
Prior Board Action(s): The Board adopted the County's Legislative Platform in January 2009.				
Alternatives – Results of Non-Approval: The County of Sonoma would not take a position at this time on Assembly Bill 324 (Beall) - Aging: Elder Economic Security Standard Index				

Background:

Many local agencies lack an accurate, geographically-specific metric of what it takes for individuals and families to cover basic living expenses in today's economy. Eligibility for many public benefit programs is based on whether an individual or family falls under the Federal Poverty Line (FPL). The FPL was a measure established in 1963 based solely on the cost of a very basic diet, and excludes consideration of other basic living costs such as healthcare and housing.

While updated annually, the FPL is calculated the same in all states. A senior living in rural Arkansas would receive the same amount of funds as a senior living in a higher cost-of-living market, such as Sonoma County. Thus the FPL understates the true number of individuals struggling to make ends meet, particularly affecting seniors on a fixed income.

Compounding this problem is the fact that under current circumstances, seniors may be rendered ineligible for a public benefit program after receiving an automatic Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA). These COLA's may place seniors in an income bracket that is above the Federal Poverty Level but below the amount needed to cover their basic living expenses. On April 15, 2009, the Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council passed a request for the Board of Supervisors to support federal and state legislation that would increase protections for seniors disqualified from public programs/services due to a cost of living adjustment.

Assembly Bill 324 (Beall) helps address these issues by creating an Elder Economic Security Standard™ Index (Elder Index) to provide a better measure of poverty to plan for the needs of California's growing aging population. The Elder Index is a new tool that accurately quantifies the annual cost of meeting basic needs for retired, older adults in each California county, and would be updated annually by the California Department of Aging. Institutionalizing this tool would enable direct service providers to identify seniors struggling to cover their costs and refer them to appropriate resources.

Additionally, AB 324 would:

- Require California Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) to use the Elder Index to determine poverty in preparing their needs assessment and in developing local area plans.
- Sunset this provision if private funding to update the Elder Index is not carried out.

County of Sonoma support for AB 324 (Beall) would not obligate the County for additional General Fund support for human services programs based on a revised assessment of poverty in Sonoma County. While the Elder Index will be a useful tool in measuring the true needs of Sonoma County seniors, additional funding would be needed to be identified in order to expand eligibility for public benefit programs.

AB 324 is sponsored by the Insight Center for Community Economic Development and the Women's Foundation of California, and co-sponsored by Catholic Charities of California, the National Association of Social Workers (California Chapter) and the California Senior Legislature.

Requested Board Action:

Approve resolution of support for Assembly Bill 324 (Beall) - Aging: Elder Economic Security Standard Index

Attachments: None.

On File With Clerk: None.

CLERK OF THE BOARD USE ONLY

Board Action (If other than "Requested")

Vote: