

**Standing Committees &
Subcommittees:**

Veterans Affairs (Chair)
Business & Professions (Vice Chair)
Agriculture & Water Resources
Appropriations
Banking, Commerce & Int'l Trade
Governmental Organization
Natural Resources & Wildlife
Ca-European Trade Development
Creation or Expansion of
Occupational Regulation

CALIFORNIA STATE SENATE

SENATOR

K. MAURICE JOHANNESSEN

ASSISTANT REPUBLICAN LEADER



Select Committees:

CALFED Water Program (Chair)
California's Wine Industry
Capitol Area Flood Protection
Delta Resources & Development
Forestry
Int'l Trade Policy & State Legislation
Investigate Price Manipulation of the
Wholes?7Energyce rkeent

4th SENATE DISTRICT

May 8, 2002

Mr. Paul Ramirez, News Director
KQED Radio
San Francisco, California

Dear Mr. Ramirez:

Regarding your callers who expressed concerns about the current condition of Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal reimbursements and their ability to receive adequate treatment, this has been an ongoing problem with the state medical reimbursement programs. In my district, particularly the northern rural communities, the reimbursement imbalance has created a shortage of specialists and general practice medical personnel who will treat patients or even practice in rural areas.

There was a particular situation in 2000 where a coalition of Shasta County health care facilities and professionals had to import ear, nose and throat specialists to treat area children on the Medi-Cal program. A local shortage of ENT specialists and low Medi-Cal reimbursement rates led to the development of a backlog of low-income children in need of ear, nose or throat surgeries. Specialists were brought in from other regions of the state to help alleviate the backlog of medical cases by performing medical procedures for free.

Obviously, reimbursement rates and the timeliness of payment are hindering the availability of medical attention to many in the Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal programs. The Senate Republicans had offered a plan to the Governor for last year's budget that would have raised reimbursement payments by about twenty-five percent for both programs. However, the proposed increases did not become part of the 2001-2002 budget, and thus remained unchanged.

I have introduced legislation, Senate Bill 1418, that would address the lack of timely approval of new Medi-Cal providers by the Department of Health Services. Last year there was a pharmacist in a rural community who waited over 6 months for approval by the Department to provide services to Medi-Cal beneficiaries. The pharmacist's approval came only after my office's intervention along with some local media coverage. If we have medical professionals willing to assist Medi-Cal and Denti-Cal patients, the Department of Health Services should not unduly delay their being approved and granted provider numbers.

Making healthcare available to everyone is obviously a complex issue that will not be remedied quickly or with one piece of legislation. However, I am aware of the problems and continue to work toward workable solutions for all parties involved. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. Maurice Johannesen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping underline.

K. MAURICE JOHANNESSEN