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- Technology
- Food
- Pets
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- CBS OnDemand
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# Local News

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Mar 31, 2009 7:19 pm US/Pacific

## CoCo County Cuts Health Care, Sheriff's Deputies

MARTINEZ (CBS 5 / KCBS / BCN) —

Contra Contra County Supervisors Tuesday approved \$50 million in budget cuts that will slash deeply into every department, from health services to the sheriff's office.

Included in the cuts are the elimination of non-emergency medical care for illegal immigrants, 50 layoffs in the sheriff's department and 20 layoffs in the District Attorney's office.

The cuts are designed to close a deficit created in part by declining property and sales tax revenues.

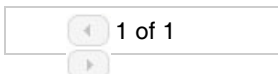


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The cuts to health care for illegal immigrants prompted emotional pleas at the supervisors meeting in Martinez. Immigrant activists strongly opposed the action especially as the state honors labor leader Cesar Chavez this week.

The Contra Contra County Supervisors meet in Martinez.

CBS



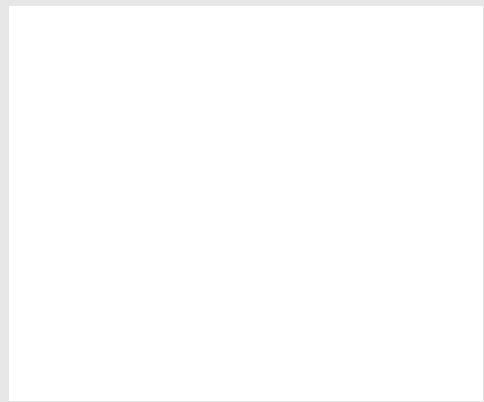
"This is a time that as a community we need all of us to pull together versus making an already vulnerable and marginalized community even more at risk," said activist Linda Salinas.

William Walker, director of Contra Costa Health Services, said he would continue to work with local hospitals and clinics to find other ways to provide non-emergency care to illegal immigrants.

Walker said denying basic health care was an "unwise, dangerous and unethical thing to do."

He said the county has been providing non-emergency medical services to about 5,000 illegal immigrants at a cost of about \$6 million per year.

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Walker argued that the planned cuts are bad public policy that will ultimately increase emergency room visits, which are much more expensive for the county. Hospitals are legally prohibited from denying emergency health care to uninsured people regardless of their immigration status.

The county will continue to provide health care to undocumented children up to age 19, pregnant women and people with HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis.

Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization, which represents more than 35,000 families in Contra Costa County, also released a statement opposing the health care cuts.

"We believe it is morally flawed, fiscally irresponsible and bad public health policy," the group stated.

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