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Service Providers Statewide Applaud Ed Robert's Induction into the California Hall of Fame

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The California Disability Services Association (CDSA) applauds Governor Jerry Brown and First Lady Anne Brown for honoring California's own "father of the disability rights movement," Ed Roberts, with his posthumous induction into the 2011 California Hall of Fame.

Ed Roberts was an international leader and educator in the independent living and disability rights movements. He fought throughout his life to enable all persons with disabilities to fully participate in society, a principle mirrored in California's unique Lanterman Act, and the state's resulting service delivery system for Californians with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

Mr. Roberts was a true pioneer: he was the first student with significant disabilities to attend UC Berkeley. He was a founder of UC's Physically Disabled Students Program, which became the model for Berkeley's Center for Independent Living (CIL) and over 400 independent living centers nationwide. He was one of the early directors of CIL, guiding CIL's rapid growth during a decisive time for the emerging disability rights movement. The CIL provided a model for a new kind of community organization designed to address the needs and concerns of people with a wide range of disabilities.

In 1976, newly elected Governor Jerry Brown appointed Ed Roberts as the first Director of the California Department of Vocational Rehabilitation with a disability; Mr. Roberts was awarded a MacArthur fellowship; and he was co-founder and President of the World Institute on Disability, where he served as president until his death in 1995.

This lengthy list of achievements only scratches the surface of what Ed Roberts has done for California's disability community and the disability community worldwide. His advocacy broke barriers on his own behalf, for others with severe disabilities and for people with milder disabilities. His courage, political activism and leadership paved the way for all individuals with any kind of disability to get the supports they need to work, be educated, live and play in their own communities.

As California's financial troubles persist, social services, and especially services for people with disabilities, continue to bear the brunt of sweeping budget cuts. CDSA encourages everyone to honor Ed Roberts and his legacy by ensuring that we identify and enact long-term solutions that will enable all Californians with disabilities to receive the services and supports they need to live like people without disabilities.

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CDSA is a statewide trade association representing 100 community-based organizations that help persons with developmental disabilities throughout California find meaningful employment, live independently, and participate in a broad range of activities. For more information about CDSA and the services our member organizations provide, visit www.cal-dsa.org.