

Permanent Disability Horror Story No. 13 Rebecca Graham

The Schwarzenegger Administration's Disability Rating Schedule severely cuts benefits to permanently disabled workers.

About Me: My name is Becky Graham. I am 44 years old, and I live in Sebastopol, near Santa Rosa.

My Family: I am a single mother, with a daughter, 19, and a son, 16. I'm also very close to my extended family of nieces, nephews and grandnephews (like Dylan James, right).



My Job and What Happened: I worked in a local specialty grocery and delicatessen. In September 2003, I injured my back lifting and carrying heavy bowls used to set up the deli section for the day. An x-ray and an MRI showed a ruptured disc that causes constant pain. The ruptured disk was pressing against my spine, and made it impossible to lift my arm. Now, lifting any more than 10 lbs now aggravates my pain. I was eager to return to work and retrained for office duties. I returned to work for the same employer using my new training, but my work and earnings are less.

What this has meant to my life: My work injury changed my life drastically for the worse. I've returned to work, but I make much less than I did before my injury. I can't garden, play Frisbee with my family, or canoe in the river. I can barely chop vegetables to cook. I still receive rave work reviews, but I'm told a raise isn't possible. My hours are now limited to 23 a week. I've lost health insurance and other benefits. I no longer receive temporary disability benefits either. I've been hurt financially as well as physically. We now live in a 400 sq. foot cottage. It's all we can afford.

How the Governor's Schedule Affects Me

How Workers' Comp was supposed to help me:

Workers' compensation is supposed to compensate me for the earnings I will lose over my working life due to my on-the-job injury. My Permanent Disability Compensation is my ONLY compensation for the continuing pain, mental stress, and my inability to do normal daily life activities. I earn much less than I did before I was injured. The governor's schedule took away more than half of my Permanent Disability Compensation.

BEFORE	AFTER
\$13,968	\$6,336 (Down 55%)

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