

CANDICE FILEK'S Permanent Disability Horror Story

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

About Me: My name is Candice Filek. I am 59 years old, and live in Palo Cedro, near Redding.

My Family: I am married, with one daughter, age 31. My husband, Greg, is disabled. Our daughter is a U.S. Marine Captain, just back from Iraq, and is stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Her husband is heading to Iraq for his third tour of duty there.

My Job and What Happened: I have worked for the Shasta County Sheriff's Department since 1992. I was working as Records Supervisor in February 2001, when I was injured while lifting a heavy box of prisoners' legal files. I had lifted file boxes without problem for years, but this box weighed more than 100 pounds. The heavy file box had been left in the middle of the walkway. I felt a pop in my back as I lifted the box, and immediately dropped it. The doctor diagnosed me with three collapsed disks in my lower back. I need four major back surgeries to install steel rods and replace the collapsed disks. The outcome of the surgeries is uncertain, so I'm continuing to work as long as possible, hopefully until I retire, before having to undergo the surgeries.

What this has meant to my life: I live with pain in my back and legs every day. Some days my back is too painful to go to work. I'm on painkillers. I don't sleep well, maybe 2-3 hours a night. I can't do the things I used to do: ride my bike, garden, or even cook a family dinner.

How the Governor's Schedule Affects Me

How Workers' Comp was supposed to help me:

I love my job, and I'm doing all I can to keep working. I now must pay for things I used to do myself: mowing our lawn, trimming our trees, and washing the windows. Gardening was my hobby, but I can't do that anymore. I can't exercise. I get exhausted getting through the day. I've always been a get-up-and-go person, but now I pay for help with daily chores. I can barely walk long enough to do our grocery shopping. I never thought the governor's changes would hurt me so badly.

BEFORE

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AFTER

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