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NATIONWIDE BUDGET CUTBACKS AFFECTING DISABILITY COMMUNITY AND THE ELDERLY: Legislators Cutting Care for Those who Need it Most

WHAT: The current economy is forcing many states to closely examine which programs and services can be slashed for savings – unfortunately, people with disabilities and the elderly are often the first to feel the impact.

Following the example of budget cuts in other states, on February 18, 2010, the LA Daily News reported that Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has proposed cuts to the \$5.5 billion In-Home Support Services Program, forcing hundreds of thousands of elderly and disabled Californians to lose vital home care and potentially end up in nursing homes. The governor's proposed cuts to the program would turn back the clock on three decades of how society cares for the elderly and disabled, the analysis by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research said.

WHO: These decisions are of grave concern to Joni Eareckson Tada, disability advocate and founder of the Joni and Friends International Disability Center. A quadriplegic herself, she knows how vital this government support is for those with disabilities.

“Although tough economic times require that we all tighten our belts, at the same time we must be very careful that these cost-savings do not adversely affect the weakest and most vulnerable in our society,” Tada said.

“If we withdraw these essential in-home services for disabled people and the elderly – such as basic attendant care and assisted living in the home – most of these people will have no choice but to go to a nursing home,” Tada continued. “We can't withdraw this kind of necessary and critical help to the disabled and the elderly unless we want to evict them from their homes to be warehoused in long-term care facilities.”

WHEN & WHERE: **By appointment via phone and in studio from Los Angeles**

DETAILS: To request an interview, please contact Melany Ethridge at melany@alarryross.com or 972.267.1111.