



*California Dental Hygienists' Association*  
*The Voice of Dental Hygiene*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Signs Landmark Law for California Dental Hygienists**

*CDHA-Sponsored SB 853 Provides Greater Autonomy and Recognition of Profession*

**SACRAMENTO, Calif. (June 13, 2008)** – Ending several decades of struggle by California dental hygienists to achieve independence as a distinct public health profession, Governor Schwarzenegger today signed Senate Bill 853 (Perata).

The measure creates the Dental Hygiene Committee a new regulatory body housed under the California Dental Board dedicated solely to overseeing the state's dental hygiene profession. With the Governor's signature, California becomes the first state in the nation to establish a self-regulating agency charged with licensure, education and enforcement of dental hygiene.

The law is necessary because the profession of dental hygiene has evolved into a specialized area of oral healthcare that requires specialized skills and responsibilities warranting a separate regulatory body.

"The new law realizes a goal we first set in 1985 to control our own destiny and we have been fighting for that ever since," said Noel Kelsch, president of the [California Dental Hygienists' Association](#) (CDHA), which sponsored the bill. "It provides practical benefits for consumers, as well as a recognition that the state's dental hygienists possess unique expertise, stature and skills similar to those of pharmacists, optometrists, physician assistants and nurses."

CDHA made special note of the political and personal commitment of the bill's author, Senator Don Perata, whom Kelsch credited with ensuring the law became a reality after so many years.

"All Californians owe a debt of gratitude for the work of Senator Perata, his staff and all those past legislators who have fought this battle," said Kelsch. In addition to creating the new Dental Hygiene Committee, the law:

- Extends the July 1, 2008 sunset date for DBC to January 1, 2012.
- Requires DBC to hire a full-time management level staff person to work under the direction of the executive officer. That staff person's sole responsibility will be managing matters related to dental assisting.
- Abolishes the Dental Auxiliary Fund and requires the deposit of all funds from the regulation of dental assistants to be deposited in the State Dental Assistant Fund.
- Establishes the State Dental Hygiene Fund and requires that all fees and certain fines paid by dental hygienists be deposited into the fund.

The new law goes into effect January 1, 2009.

“It’s an outrage that millions of Californians are deprived of oral healthcare,” said Kelsch. “But with this new regulatory structure dedicated to our profession, we are hopeful the state’s dental hygienists will be in an even better position to expand access to care to underserved communities throughout California.”

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*The California Dental Hygienists’ Association (CDHA) is the authoritative voice of the state’s dental hygiene profession. The organization was established 20 years ago when two regional associations merged to form a unified professional group. CDHA represents thousands of dental hygienists throughout the state and is dedicated to expanding opportunities for the profession and access to care for all Californians.*