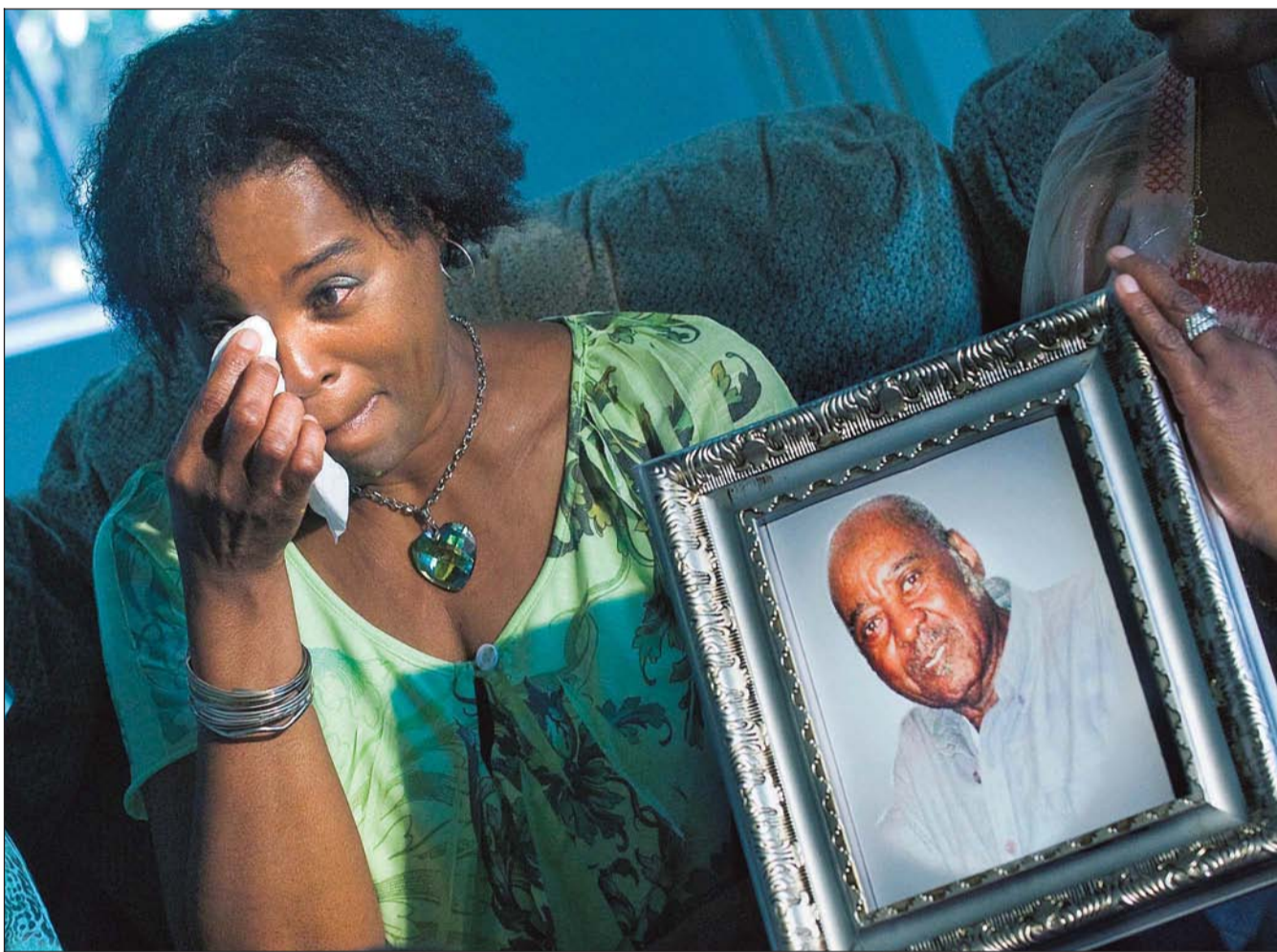


« **PLAYOFF PUSH BEGINS** SPORTS

A & E **A 'DAY' LIKE NO OTHER** »

## PATIENTS LEFT BEHIND AT NURSING HOMES

Funding from state meant to aid staffing and care was diverted.



CINDY YAMANAKA, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Patricia Miller, 57, of San Diego cries when asked about her father, T.J. Jackson, pictured, who died in 2007. Miller and her three sisters are suing St. Edna Subacute & Rehabilitation Center in Santa Ana, alleging inadequate care.

Six years ago, the state Legislature approved a new program that would send more than \$880 million to 1,100 California nursing homes that treat Medi-Cal patients. The law was intended to boost staffing and care levels for these patients. But the Legislature included few safeguards to ensure funds were spent as intended.

Many nursing homes did add staff. But an analysis by the nonprofit newsroom California Watch indicated that 232 homes across the state slashed staff and let nursing ratios fall below the state minimum after receiving the additional money.

A dozen homes run by the Aliso Viejo-based Covenant Care chain were

among those that stood out. California Watch found that they accepted \$15 million in additional compensation from the state but still cut employees.

**"By paying the legal fees of nursing homes that are neglecting and abusing residents, the state is subsidizing their mistreatment."**

**MICHAEL CONNORS**  
CALIFORNIA ADVOCATES FOR NURSING HOME REFORM

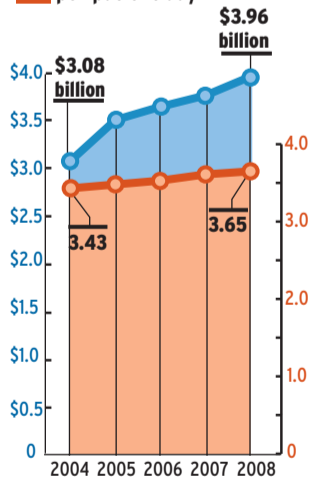
Now the chain has been sued by the families of three patients who allege that poor care at one of those homes, St. Edna of Santa Ana, resulted in injuries or deaths.

In a telephone interview, Covenant Care President Robert A. Levin declined to comment on how the company used the extra state money and how patients were treated at his facilities. But a lawyer for the company said that Covenant and St. Edna provided proper care and that neither was responsible for those deaths. **NEWS 4**

### State pay increases rise more steeply than staffing rates

The 2004 state law that increased nursing home funding was meant to boost staffing levels at the state's homes. While payments increased 29 percent statewide, staffing rates went up 6 percent. And in many homes, staffing levels declined.

■ Medi-Cal funding to nursing homes  
■ Staffing rate, nursing hours per patient day



Source: California Watch analysis of data from Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development  
The Register

## Irvine Co. dusts off its hammers, nails

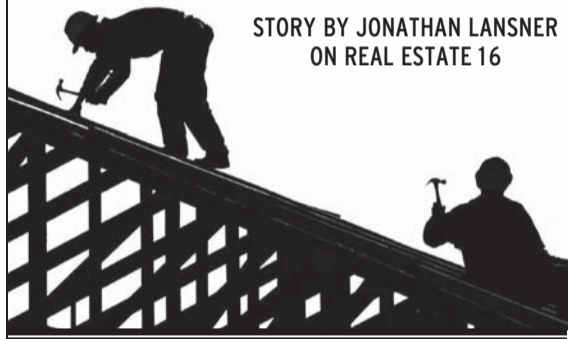
A rebounding market for new homes has drawn the Irvine Co. back into the construction business.

The big land developer has not built homes on its own for two decades. Now with its Irvine communities teeming with shoppers, Irvine Co. will return to homebuilding with 248 homes in north Irvine to be sold as soon as November.

**EXCLUSIVE**

Irvine Co. is encouraged by the surprising response to its set of new communities launched in January. In 74 days, builders hired by Irvine Co. have contracted to sell 341 homes - slightly more than half the homes it planned to sell over two years.

STORY BY JONATHAN LANSNER ON REAL ESTATE 16



### OC WATCHDOG



SAM GANGWER, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Bobbi Lee Smart, 25, says a signature gatherer tricked her into registering as a Republican at Cypress College.

## Petitioners apply dubious tactics to lift GOP rolls

More than 170 young Orange County voters have been tricked into registering to vote as Republicans, an investigation by The Orange County Register has uncovered. Beginning in mid-March, state elections officials started receiving complaints from county voters who said they were registered to vote Republican without their consent. An independent investigation by the Register found an additional 74 people who said they were duped or coerced into registering to vote Republican by signature gatherers who initially asked them to sign petitions.

All of the voters identified by the Register live in the 34th state Senate District, where Republicans hope to defeat incumbent Democrat Lou Correa in the fall.

Similar fraud occurred four years ago, resulting in eight petitioners being jailed.

STORY BY BRIAN JOSEPH ON NEWS 14

## Dueling attorneys personify pot wars

If ever two websites captured the essence of California's medical marijuana wars, it would seem to be those of two attorneys battling over the pot dispensaries in Lake Forest.

One site has rotating pictures of lush marijuana plants, a pile of weed with rolling papers and a pot plant with a prescription bottle. Its Web address?

[themarijuanalawyer.com](http://themarijuanalawyer.com).

The other has rotating videos of farm fields, energy windmills and a classroom behind cutouts of the letters BB&K, the initials of the law firm, Best, Best and Krieger. BB&K - "established in 1891" - boasts eight offices, 134 staffers, 31 paralegals and 170 lawyers.

TheMarijuanaLawyer has

one office, two lawyers and an administrative assistant.

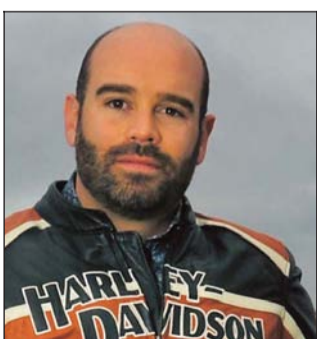
Guess which of these opposing attorneys belongs to which firm:

Chris Glew: Kent State University undergrad, Whittier Law School, based in Santa Ana, member of the NORML



**DAVID WHITING**  
REGISTER COLUMNIST

SEE WHITING • PAGE 10



H. LORREN AU JR. (LEFT) AND MINDY SCHAUER, THE REGISTER  
Jeffrey Dunn, left, and Chris Glew represent opposing legal forces in the medical marijuana debate.

### VOLCANO'S INFLUENCE EXTENDS WORLDWIDE

Eruptions continued at Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano Saturday, increasing aviation and business disruption worldwide. Scientists said they could not predict an end to the disturbance. **NEWS 17**



### COACHELLA CHANNELS MUSIC AND MEANING

For local residents who made the pilgrimage to the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, the event is an experience not likely to be forgotten during their lifetime. **NEWS 3**



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### TODAY'S WEATHER

66/55 | 73/54  
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