

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS OF TORTURE

According to the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement, there are an estimated 500,000 foreign survivors of politically motivated torture currently living in the United States as accounted-for refugees. Every day, these survivors strive to become self-sufficient and healthy members of their new communities while also struggling to reclaim the strength and vitality that were stolen from them by brutal dictators and governments.

In June, attorneys and registered lobbyists in our Sacramento office, along with members of the California Consortium of Torture Treatment Centers, met with over 20 legislative offices and received a joint legislative resolution co-signed by 13 California legislators recognizing the 10th anniversary of the United Nations "International Day in Support of Victims of Torture." In addition, Governor Schwarzenegger issued a proclamation declaring June 26, 2007 as a "Day in Support of Victims of Torture" in California.

This recognition directly followed our administrative and legislative advocacy efforts on behalf of San Diego-based Survivors of Torture International, a founding consortium member. Over the past two years, the Manatt Sacramento office has worked closely with Survivors of Torture International on projects ranging from seeking recognition of the plight of survivors among state opinion leaders, to pursuing grants from the California Mental Health Services Act

and other state funds for program services that help survivors recover from their experience and build better lives in California.

From September 2005 through June 2007, Manatt professionals **Tom McMorrow, Mike Martinez, McKay Tanner** and **Fred Main** contributed over 300 pro bono hours to supporting Survivors of Torture International.

In order to increase the likelihood of success in the State Capitol, our attorneys and professionals have worked closely with the consortium to elevate their presence and inform legislators and their staff that a great number of survivors live among their constituents.

This lobbying effort is so unique that it has attracted press attention. Kathi Anderson, Executive Director of Survivors of Torture International,

told the press that she is encouraged by the reception the consortium members and their message is receiving in the Capitol. "We got a lot of bipartisan support," Anderson said. "Many legislators have asked us what they can do to help."

Tom McMorrow, the partner in charge of Manatt's Sacramento office, told the press that policy makers and opinion leaders want to help survivors of torture transition successfully to their new American home once they come to appreciate what an escapee has been through. "The personal stories of survivors speak for themselves,"



Members of the California Consortium of Torture Treatment Centers receive their special resolution in the California Assembly Chamber.