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Schwarzenegger's workers' comp plan lambasted

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Opponents of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed changes in workers' compensation on Tuesday fired a salvo in what's sure to be a continuation of a contentious issue.

"Gov. Schwarzenegger ignores the root causes of soaring premium rates - past carrier irresponsibility and current profitability," charged Art Azevedo, president of the California Applicants' Attorneys Association, at a Capitol news conference.

"We should regulate workers' compensation insurance carriers just as all other forms of insurance are regulated," Mr. Azevedo said. "Only if we prohibit excessive rates will employers and injured workers receive the protection they deserve. Right now, only the insurance companies are benefiting."

He called for reform centering on five points: preserving the right of injured workers to full medical treatment; funding the Division of Workers Compensation; regulating workers' compensation insurers; increasing penalties on employers and insurance carriers who refuse or unreasonably delay payment of injured workers' benefits; and combating fraud.