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## Benoit's Good Samaritan law signed

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The Desert Sun*

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on Thursday announced he's signed the Good Samaritan Protection Act, providing legal immunity for emergency service volunteers who help out when needed.

SB 39, by Sen. John Benoit, R-Bermuda Dunes, was one of two bills designed to strengthen California's Good Samaritan law. A December Supreme Court ruling determined the 1980 law only protected good-doers from liability when they gave medical care during an emergency.

Benoit's bill provided protection for emergency service volunteer workers who perform disaster services. AB 83, by Assemblyman Mike Feuer, D-Los Angeles, gives Good Samaritans who provide both medical and non-medical help legal immunity unless they act recklessly.

The governor on Thursday announced both bills were included in a sweeping signing of 128 bills.

Benoit's bill takes effect immediately.

Benoit said in a news release that the court's ruling had a "chilling effect" on those who were willing to help.

During an interview with The Desert Sun, the former highway patrolman said he couldn't count "how many times I was unbelievably thankful for the folks who got there before me" and were helping the victims out until emergency crews arrived.

Benoit said he hoped the bill would eliminate "any lingering doubts" Good Samaritans had about possible civil actions they could face from helping.

"Good Samaritans should never again have to second-guess the consequences of helping," Benoit said.

Dr. Max Weil, a Rancho Mirage critical care specialist and a desert leader in CPR training, was a key supporter of Benoit's bill.

"It will help to persuade people that, when a human life is involved, there is no reasonable risk to anyone who does the humane act of trying to save that life until professional help can come," Weil said Thursday.