NEWS

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Supervisors vote to improve ethics rules and information access

The Board of Supervisors today set the County of San Bernardino on course with a goal to become the nation's leader in tough ethics rules and easy, anonymous access to public documents by approving a slate of reforms developed by Board Chairman Bill Postmus and Fourth District Supervisor Gary Ovitt.

"We know of no other government agency in the nation that goes to the extent we plan to go to make information available to the public and hold government officials accountable for their actions," Chairman Postmus said after he and fellow supervisors Ovitt, Paul Biane, and Josie Gonzales adopted the reform measures. Supervisor Dennis Hansberger was absent from today's meeting.

"The public has the right to a government it can trust," Supervisor Ovitt said. "These measures will open government up to the public in every way imaginable and assure citizens that anyone who violates their trust will be held accountable."

The Board today voted to direct County Administrative Officer Mark Uffer to perform the following tasks by February 7, 2006:

- Develop wording that would elevate county ethics policies to ordinances punishable by criminal sanctions.

- Evaluate the county's ethics rules and training programs and recommend improvements. This would include re-examining the role of the county's Ethics Resource Officer and determining whether an outside professional should carry out the county's ethics program.

"We are working toward an ethics program that actively includes all county employees as well as elected and appointed officials," Mr. Uffer said. "We are also looking forward to having the tools to prevent unethical behavior before it occurs, and to administer appropriate punishment when those rules have been broken."

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The Board also directed the CAO and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to perform the following tasks by February 7, 2006:

- Provide the public with online access to California forms 460 (campaign finance disclosure) and 700 (statements of economic interest) for county elected and appointed officials.

- Provide the public with online access to Board of Supervisors agendas and fair statements with a searchable database.

- Provide the public with online access to county contractor and vendor information.

- Develop a hosted e-mail subscription service that would allow visitors the county website, www.sbcounty.gov, to receive automatic e-mail updates on information they've requested.

Several years ago the County of San Bernardino became the first county in the state to make Board of Supervisors agendas, along with all supporting documentation, available online.

"The action taken by the Board of Supervisors today will continue that proud tradition of open and honest government," Chairman Postmus said.

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