

PRESS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Supervisor Rutherford Supports Governor's Pension Reform Proposals

SAN BERNARDINO – Oct. 27, 2011 – San Bernardino County Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford applauded the proposal Gov. Jerry Brown released Thursday to overhaul state and local pensions to create a fair and sustainable retirement system for public employees.

“It’s fair to say that Gov. Brown and I don’t see eye-to-eye on every issue,” said Rutherford – a conservative Republican. “But I support his proposal to retool our state and local pension systems before they become an even bigger burden on taxpayers and siphon more resources away from our core needs like public safety and infrastructure investments.”

Gov. Brown’s proposal calls for increasing the retirement age for new, non-safety state and local employees from 55 to 67 and placing them into a hybrid pension system that combines a defined-benefit pension with 401(k)-style plan. The proposal also calls for banning “pension spiking” where employees use accumulated vacation time and other compensation to boost their pension payments, which are currently based on employees’ compensation in their final year.

The Governor’s proposal also calls for all public employees to contribute at least 50 percent of the annual cost of their pension benefits. Under the current system, San Bernardino County picks up about 90 percent of retirement costs for most general employees.

“The public pension system has relied on market and investment earnings to stay afloat, and when those earnings don’t materialize, taxpayers are left holding the bag,” Rutherford said. “We have to create a system that equitably distributes the market risk between taxpayers and those who receive the benefits.”

Pension costs will consume about \$105 million or about 15 percent of San Bernardino County’s discretionary fund spending this fiscal year, and the costs are expected to rise to \$163.9 million or about 22 percent of discretionary spending by 2015-16.

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County Works with Fontana to Add Turn Lane to Cherry Avenue Project

SAN BERNARDINO – Nov. 1, 2011 – On Tuesday, the Board of Supervisors agreed to add a right turn lane to the ongoing Cherry Avenue widening project at the request and expense of the City of Fontana.

“Whenever possible, San Bernardino County and its incorporated cities work together to bring about improvements that serve all of our residents, and this right turn lane project is a perfect example of how that partnership should work,” San Bernardino County Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford.

The County began work on widening Cherry Avenue from two to three lanes in each direction from Whittram Avenue to Foothill Boulevard in January 2011. The \$5-million, two-phase project will be completed next year. The first phase of the project included relocating utilities and business signs, constructing retaining walls, and installing block walls and fencing in front of residential properties.

Fontana asked the County if a right turn lane could be added at the southeast corner of Cherry Avenue and Foothill Boulevard to help improve traffic flow. The City also agreed to pay for all of the construction costs, estimated at \$90,500.

“This is the classic win-win situation,” Rutherford said. “The County can simply construct the right turn lane while we are already widening Cherry Avenue, saving Fontana both money and time and costing the County nothing extra.”

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Exemption Ordinance Saves County Businesses More than \$2.8 Million

SAN BERNARDINO – Nov. 1, 2011 – An exemption ordinance approved by the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday will save San Bernardino County businesses more than \$2.8 million while also eliminating the need for them to complete and submit reams of paperwork.

“It feels good to put a dent in the overregulation that is pinching small business owners and stalling our economic recovery, and I look forward to doing it again and again,” said Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford, who requested the exemption ordinance during Board of Supervisors budget hearings earlier this year.

The County ordinance, which requires a second reading, will exempt local businesses that handle 6,000 cubic feet or less of compressed carbon dioxide for use in soda machines or the same amount of compressed helium for use in balloons from complying with the State’s hazardous materials requirements.

California law requires businesses that handle more than 200 cubic feet (about two small cylinders) of compressed gasses or other potentially harmful materials to file a Hazardous Materials Business Emergency Plan with the local fire agency. The law is typically applied to businesses that handle hazardous materials such as metal working firms, paint and coatings manufacturers, hospitals, dry cleaners, photo developers, and automotive repair garages.

State law, however, allows a local fire agency to exempt certain materials that do not pose a present or potential danger to the environment or human health and safety if released into the environment.

In addition to completing lengthy paperwork, businesses — in most cases — also pay a fee to the local agency. San Bernardino County Fire had proposed charging businesses a flat fee of \$408.

“A small restaurant owner has to sell a lot of roast beef sandwiches to earn \$400,” Rutherford said. “Now they can keep that money in their business and forget about adding needless paperwork to their already busy schedules.”

More than 7,300 businesses, including restaurants, convenience stores, florist shops, and other businesses, would have been required to pay the fee and file paperwork in San Bernardino County without the exemption ordinance.

A handful of other counties and cities in California also exempt restaurants and other businesses that use carbon dioxide for soda machines or helium for balloons from the state’s hazardous materials requirements, including San Diego County, Sacramento County, Tulare County Glenn County, and Fresno County.

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NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
AT YOUR SERVICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information, contact
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Board of Supervisors launches Support Our Troops drive

County residents will have a chance to provide real and badly needed help to the families of military troops in harm's way this holiday season.

The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday launched the County's fifth annual Support Our Troops campaign and is urging county residents to donate gift cards, gas cards, and pre-paid phone cards to be distributed to local National Guard Units and the family support offices at Fort Irwin and Twentynine Palms. Cash donations will be accepted as well and converted into gift, gas, and phone cards.

"Our annual County 'Support Our Troops' outreach gives us an opportunity to express our continued support and reminds us that they are never too far away," said Board of Supervisors Chair Josie Gonzales, who brought the program forward for consideration.

Support Our Troops 2011 will be coordinated by the County Department of Veterans Affairs. Information on the program and how to donate is available at <http://hss.co.san-bernardino.ca.us/VA/>, or by calling the County Department of Veterans Affairs at (909) 387-5516.