

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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Gonzales, Mitzelfelt elected Chair and Vice Chairman

The Board of Supervisors today selected Fifth District Supervisor Josie Gonzales to serve as board chair during the next two years and First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt to serve as vice chairman.

"It's a new day," said Chair Josie Gonzales. "We are looking to the positive as my colleagues and I work with the county Chief Executive Officer to shape our vision, focusing on building strong, economically viable, healthy communities throughout San Bernardino County."

"I would like to thank my colleagues for selecting me as vice chairman," said Supervisor Mitzelfelt. "I pledge to work cooperatively with the chair in helping lead this organization as we deal with many painful budget decisions ahead, and, on a more positive note, as we pursue initiatives to improve County government and the quality of life for our residents."

Chair Gonzales was elected on a 3-2 vote with Mitzelfelt and Third District Supervisor Neil Derry in opposition. Vice Chairman Mitzelfelt was elected unanimously.

The voter-approved county charter states the chair serves as the board's general executive agent. The chair's duties include conducting meetings of the board, signing agreements approved by the board, and acting on the board's behalf when the board is not immediately available.

The Board of Supervisors faces a number of challenges in the months and years ahead. The county is projecting a \$37.2 million shortfall for 2011-12 and \$135.2 million over the next five years. On top of that, the county has yet to see how the state will cope with its ongoing shortfall. Sacramento has exhausted all of its options except for measures that will severely impact local government, and the state's outlook is worsening.

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Nearly 80 percent of the county's \$135.2 million, five-year shortfall is due to contracted salary and the projected growth in the cost of retirement obligations. Retirement costs alone over the next five years are projected to increase by \$103.8 million annually.

Covering more than 20,000 square miles and serving more than 2 million residents, the County of San Bernardino is the largest county in the contiguous United States in terms of area and the fifth largest in California in terms of population. The County's 40 departments provide a wide range of vital public services to residents, visitors, and businesses in the areas of law and justice, fire protection, health care, public health, parks, museums, elections, libraries, airports, economic development, job growth, and aid to children, the elderly, veterans, and the poor.