

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
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County proposed budget set for adoption June 23

The Board of Supervisors today unanimously approved the proposed budget, slated for adoption at the next Board of Supervisors meeting, Tuesday June 23, 2009. Today's presentation represents a balanced, on-time budget for the fiscal year that begins on July 1, while also remaining fully aware that the state's attempts to solve its fiscal crisis could wreak havoc on the county's successful effort to maintain vital services in the face of an epic economic crisis.

The county has so far been able to avoid the layoffs, severe cuts in vital services, and bond rating decreases suffered by other counties and cities by detecting and acting upon the economic downturn in its infancy and refraining from using reserve funds to support recurring costs.

"Thanks to the foresight of our fiscal team, the county has been able to continue providing services now when they are needed the most," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Gary Ovitt. "Although it may be too late, the county hopes the state also chooses fiscal responsibility over short-sighted schemes that will just make the problem worse."

The budget approved today calls for total spending of \$3,890,528,742, which represents a reduction of \$60,965,450 from the current year budget.

The vast majority of county departments were forced to cut 8 percent from their budgets for the coming fiscal year in addition to 8 percent that was cut for the current year. The budget also reflects a voluntary decision by the unions that represent most county employees, including Sheriff's deputies and other sworn public safety officers, to forgo a previously agreed-upon pay increase.

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The most significant departmental cuts occurred in the Assessor's Office, which lost \$2.8 million due to the state's discontinuation of funding for the Property Tax Administration Program; Economic Development, which lost \$2.1 million in one-time funding that was granted last year but will not to be repeated in the coming year; and Facilities Management, which was trimmed by \$2 million due to a reduction in demand for services.

By acting when signs of a fiscal crisis first appeared three years ago, the county was able to reduce spending without laying off employees or cutting services to the public. The county also maintained a healthy reserve fund, which is why rating agencies have maintained or raised the county's bond ratings while other counties have seen their ratings decline.

The state, however, is facing a gargantuan fiscal crisis of its own. And decisions in Sacramento threaten to undo the county's careful planning and hard decisions. Various proposals floated by the state could cost the county nearly 1,000 jobs and more than \$670 million in funding, \$143 million of that in funding for locally financed services such as public safety.

The County of San Bernardino provides a remarkable array of vital services to the 2 million people who live in what is by far the largest geographic county in the contiguous 48 states.

The diverse collection of services provided by the county includes police and fire protection, elections, regional parks, aid to abused and neglected children and seniors, airports, immunizations, libraries, aid to the mentally ill, a state-of-the-art acute care hospital and trauma center, landfills, road construction and maintenance, museums, financial support to needy families, business attraction and retention, animal care and control, flood control, vital records, assistance to military veterans, and much more.

To view the budget visit www.sbcounty.gov