

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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For more information, contact
David Wert, Public Information Officer
(909) 387-5412
dwert@sbcounty.gov

Board of Supervisors passes balanced budget

The Board of Supervisors today passed a balanced budget for the fiscal year that begins on Thursday, closing an \$89.4 million shortfall largely with the help of employee-approved salary deferrals and departmental budget reductions.

The budget eliminates 529 positions, 85 of which are currently filled. Most of those filled positions are housed in Probation, District Attorney, Public Defender, and Land Use Services. One of the largest cuts in proportion to total budget was \$2.5 million from the Board of Supervisors.

The \$3.8 billion county spending plan does not take into account any impact the state budget could eventually have on counties, nor does it address several large-scale unfunded liabilities that will have to be addressed in future years. These include road and facility maintenance, helicopter and fire engine replacement, and accumulated leave time.

"This is just a beginning, because we are projecting deficits for the next several years," County Administrative Officer Greg Devereaux told the board. "With a projected \$48 million deficit for the 2011-12 fiscal year, we are going to work right away to find ways to tighten our belts even more."

The county used none of its \$59.7 million in general purpose reserves to balance the budget. After adding \$25 million to specific purpose reserves, the budget uses \$38 million to pay down debt, freeing up \$5 million a year in ongoing funds that otherwise would have been used as ongoing debt payment, leaving \$191.8 million in total reserves.

"This budget involved many painful decisions. But we could not lose sight of the fact that the public deserves a fiscally sound county, and that in the long run the decisions we made today will put the county in the best possible position to maintain public services and recover as the economy improves," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Gary Ovitt.