

NEWS

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Board adopts balanced budget with enhanced services

Despite a historic slow-down in revenue growth combined with an increasing need for county services, the Board of Supervisors today adopted a balanced, on-time, \$4.3 billion 2008-09 budget.

The budget, which goes into effect July 1, allows for necessary increases in public safety and human services as well as maintenance of quality-of-life programs while not imposing additional burdens on taxpayers.

"This budget accomplishes what many would assume impossible in the current economic environment," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Paul Biane. "While other California counties and cities are being forced to cut services, raise taxes, lay off employees, deplete reserves and even consider bankruptcy, our county continues to meet the needs of our residents and build for the future."

"County Administrative Officer Mark Uffer and his budget team, working in close cooperation with the Board of Supervisors, have done an excellent job with this budget," Chairman Biane added. "It's no wonder our county has been honored two years running with the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association."

There is, however, a dark cloud on the horizon. If the state eventually decides to solve its multi-billion-dollar budget deficit on the back of local government, the county may have to make some adjustments.

"We can only guess what the state may have in store for us," Mr. Uffer said. "However, our board's many years of conservative financing habits have left our county in a good position to cope with the challenges that may come along."

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The budget passed by the board today allows for work to begin on badly needed fire stations in Ludlow and Angelus Oaks, a county office building in Joshua Tree, and a new Bloomington library. It also provides support for the county's participation in the City of San Bernardino's Operation Phoenix anti-crime effort, additional support for crime-fighting efforts in the Victor Valley, an upgrade to the county's "Reverse 911" telephone emergency notification system, and replacement of a valuable jail bus.

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.