

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 12, 2010

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Fiscal reorganization will create savings and efficiency

The county will immediately save more than \$500,000 a year and could eventually realize more than \$1 million in annual savings thanks to action taken today by the Board of Supervisors to reorganize the county's fiscal departments.

Besides the cost savings, which are vital as the county enters into a difficult budget year, the reorganization will combine similar functions under the same roof, improving customer service and eliminating cumbersome bureaucracies.

Seizing upon an opportunity created by the recent retirement of the elected Treasurer-Tax Collector, the board today voted unanimously to move the functions of that office to the elected Auditor/Controller and Sheriff-Coroner. The board also moved to shift the Recorder and County Clerk functions from the Auditor/Controller to the Assessor. The action creates the new offices of Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector, Sheriff-Coroner-Public Administrator, and Assessor-Recorder-County Clerk.

"This is a common-sense, money-saving approach that could only be achieved during a narrow window of opportunity without thwarting the will of the voters," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Gary Ovitt. "It will be exciting to realize such dramatic savings during these tough times while also improving service to the public."

The timing for the reorganization was perfect because of the vacancy in the Treasurer-Tax Collector's office – the county could eliminate the position without removing an officeholder elected by the voters – and the upcoming elections.

-MORE-

Reorganization
January 12, 2010
Page 2

"The voters in June will have the chance to choose who they think should manage the reconfigured departments when the Auditor-Controller/Treasurer/Tax Collector, Sheriff-Coroner-Public Administrator, and Assessor-Recorder-County Clerk are on the ballot," Chairman Ovitt pointed out.

Immediate cost savings include elimination of the Treasurer-Tax Collector position at an annual cost of \$270,218 in salary and benefits, a Departmental Information Systems Administrator Position at an annual cost of \$196,191 in salary and benefits, and the \$200,000 cost of conducting a Treasurer-Tax Collector election every four years. The county is confident that many more savings can be identified once the reorganization occurs and duties and functions are evaluated.

In addition to the savings, the reorganization will achieve taxpayer-friendly efficiencies. Cash management will be consolidated under a single department, and tax collecting and central collections would occur under the same roof as accounts payable and receivable.

Recording would be done where parcel numbers are kept, eliminating the need to transfer data between departments. And document recording would eventually be available at Assessor field offices throughout the county. Recording is now available only in San Bernardino.

The reorganization follows a growing trend among California counties. Twenty-four of the state's 58 counties have combined Assessor-Recorders, and at least 10 counties have combined Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collectors, including Sacramento, Fresno, and Santa Clara.