

NEWS

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Gonzales, Mitzelfelt, and Derry take oath of office

Supervisor Josie Gonzales began her second full term representing the Fifth District, Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt began his first full term serving the First District, and Supervisor Neil Derry began his first term as the Third District representative following Oath of Office ceremonies at the County Government Center today.

Supervisors Gonzales, Mitzelfelt, and Derry will join Board of Supervisors Chairman Paul Biane and Vice Chairman Gary Ovitt in leading a dynamic public service organization of more than 18,000 employees working in 40 departments that provide a diverse array of vital public services. Those services include law enforcement, prosecution and defense, fire protection, economic development, aid to the needy, road and flood control construction and maintenance, elections, parks, museums, libraries, and a variety of healthcare services.

The board also faces the difficult task of leading the county through a fiscal crisis brought on by a sharp downturn in local property values, stagnant sales tax revenues, a seriously unstable state budget, and other factors traceable to the national and world economic emergency.

Thanks to conservative fiscal practices championed by the Board of Supervisors during good economic times – building healthy reserves and contingency funds, cautious use of vacant positions, not relying on overly-optimistic projections, promoting economic development – the County of San Bernardino is better positioned than most of the state's counties and cities to weather the storm. Still, the county's fiscal team foresees challenges in maintaining the levels of service county residents have come to expect.

"I am confident that this newly configured Board of Supervisors is up to the task of making the tough choices and providing the insightful leadership that will be necessary to bring us through this crisis," Chairman Biane said. "Supervisors Mitzelfelt, Derry, Ovitt, Gonzales, and I will make a great team."

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"New day, new faces, new challenges. We look to the future with hope and anticipation," said Vice Chairman Ovitt.

Supervisor Gonzales joined the board in 2004 and last month was re-elected to a second term. The Board of Supervisors appointed Supervisor Mitzelfelt to the Board in 2007 to fill a vacancy. Supervisor Derry was elected last month and succeeds Dennis Hansberger.

"Everyday as San Bernardino County Supervisor is a new and exciting adventure," said Supervisor Gonzales, whose Fifth District includes the communities of San Bernardino, Colton, Rialto, Bloomington, and Fontana. "I am honored that through the voting process you have given me this awesome opportunity. You give me the power to speak 'in the name of the people,' to intercede and make policy on issues that matter to each of you."

"I'd like to thank my family for the support they give me," Supervisor Gonzales continued. "I could not give so much to those of you whom I serve without their loyal support. I especially want to thank those of you who believe in me. I want you to know that I will not squander the trust you've placed in me. I will continue to work on your behalf during these difficult economic times, so that through all of our hard work and sacrifice we will remain resilient."

"I want to thank the voters of the First District for their faith and trust in me," Supervisor Mitzelfelt said after taking the oath of office, promising to continue to work to promote efforts to fight crime, improve transportation, and provide quality emergency health care to everyone in the county. His First District includes the vast majority of the High Desert, including the communities of Hesperia, Apple Valley, Victorville, Adelanto, Barstow, Needles, and Twentynine Palms.

"We have to continue to work on solutions to our problems," Supervisor Mitzelfelt said, citing as an example the county's efforts to address the foreclosure crisis. "We're doing better, but we can do a much better job."

"My goal is to improve services to the people of the Third District through public safety, code enforcement, and economic development," Supervisor Derry said following his swearing-in. Partnerships, he said, "are necessary if we are going to move forward."

"I look forward to changing the culture of our county through innovation and technology," Supervisor Derry added. He also reported progress on his pledge to create a county ethics commission, saying he has been working closely with Chairman Biane and expects to bring forth a proposal next month.

Supervisor Derry's Third District includes the communities of Redlands, Grand Terrace, Loma Linda, Highland, San Bernardino, Yucaipa, Yucca Valley, and Big Bear Lake.