

NEWS

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

STATEMENT BY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS CHAIRMAN GARY C. OVITT ON THE OUTCOME OF TUESDAY'S STATEWIDE ELECTION

"As expected, California voters sent a very clear message to the governor and Legislature on Tuesday. They want state government to begin living within its means, to truly balance the state budget, and to do it without relying on higher taxes and gimmicks.

"Unfortunately, this hasn't been the state's habit in times of fiscal crisis. What they have done in the past is raid the budgets of counties and cities. In San Bernardino County, we are concerned the state will now wipe out our successful efforts to continue providing vital public services without having to resort to laying off county employees.

"San Bernardino County's fiscal analysts believe that the state could hit our county for anywhere between \$37 million and \$149 million dollars that we rely upon to keep deputies patrolling our neighborhoods, prosecutors seeking justice against criminals, and to provide a host of other services upon which our residents rely for safety and quality of life.

"Those funding sums equate to approximately 500 to 2,000 county employees who would most likely have to be laid off and added to the unemployment rolls because the cuts would occur too quickly for the county to react with a more measured approach.

"This would be a shame considering that San Bernardino County has been one of the best-prepared local government agencies in the state in terms of foreseeing this crisis and taking early steps to minimize the impact to our residents.

"In late 2007, when the first sign of trouble in the housing market appeared, San Bernardino County immediately put controls on spending, particularly hiring, to create a bank of budgeted unfilled positions that could be cut in lieu of laying off employees.

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“As the fiscal crisis grew, the county was quick to tighten down even more on hiring and require departments to cut as much as possible without impacting vital services. The county’s strategies worked. As many cities and counties around the state were forced to lay off employees and curtail services, San Bernardino County continued to move forward. Only recently has the county had to ask its employees to make sacrifices, specifically by working with them to forgo a planned June pay raise.

“What Sacramento should do is begin taking a stern look at how it spends, begin a massive scaling back of costly redundant pet programs, and make some of the difficult choices counties, cities, and school districts have been making in the face of this recession – namely layoffs, work-hour reductions, and salary freezes.”