

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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Proposed budget calls for personnel & spending cuts

The Board of Supervisors next week will receive the 2010-11 proposed county budget, which will call for the elimination of 462 positions, including 85 that are currently filled.

The largest cost reduction in the proposed budget would be realized through the restructuring of contracts with general and safety employees, even though voting on the restructuring has not concluded. If employees cannot agree to the restructuring, up to 410 additional positions throughout the organization, including Sheriff's deputies, could be eliminated. Appointed and elected department heads would ultimately determine how to achieve the necessary savings.

"I believe the proposed budget reflects the board's desire to be fiscally responsible, even if that means making difficult decisions," said County Administrative Officer Greg Devereaux.

The proposed \$3.8 billion spending plan, which includes \$598.5 million in funding over which the county has control, would close an \$89.4 million shortfall. It would accomplish this in part by calling on many departments to reduce costs by up to 40 percent. Programs and filled positions in the District Attorney's Office and Public Defenders Office would be eliminated due to a reduction in state support. The plan will also recommend significant cuts in the Board of Supervisors budget.

The plan recognizes that the county's fiscal problems will likely continue many years into the future by highlighting several costly but unfunded projects and liabilities. Among them is the possible construction of public safety operations center projected at \$113 million, the 800 MHz communication system replacement project projected at \$215 million, a possible High Desert trauma center, a training facility for the Sheriff's Department, and a new County Government Center, as well as road maintenance costs.

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Employee-related costs include funding of liabilities associated with cashable leave balances projected at \$154 million.

The county also faces increasing retirement liabilities. This year, the county will have to pay \$6 million to make up for market losses experienced by the San Bernardino County Employees' Retirement Association. The county's obligation is expected to increase to \$23.6 million next year, \$43.5 million in 2012-13, and close to \$90 million or more in 2014-15.

"The county's mission is to provide for the well-being of our residents, visitors, and employers. To do that, the board realizes that we must find responsible solutions to our problems while planning for the future. This recommended budget will reflect that philosophy," Devereaux said.