

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 2, 2010

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Supervisors clarify role of county's top executive

The Board of Supervisors today made the line between policy-making and policy-execution more clear by unanimously supporting an ordinance clarifying the role of the county's top appointed executive.

The ordinance does not grant any additional authority to the County Administrative Officer – who would be known as the “Chief Executive Officer”, as is the case in five of the state's largest counties – but makes it clear that the person in that position supervises all county departments and directly manages those departments not headed by elected officials or board-appointed managers.

“This ordinance makes it clear that the Board of Supervisors sets policy and direction and the budget, and that the Chief Executive Officer carries out those directives through the direct management of the departments that report directly to the CEO,” said Board of Supervisors Chairman Gary Ovitt.

The ordinance, which will come up for final approval on Nov. 16, also makes it clear that individual Board members and Board staff do not provide direction to those who report to the CEO, which also helps to clarify the difference between the policy-making role of the Board and the policy-execution role of the CEO.

“Having served in the military, I understand that an efficient organization must have a clear chain of command and be free from micromanagement – issues the county has struggled with in the past,” said First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt. “I hope these reforms will instill confidence in businesses and industries who are considering investing in San Bernardino County by letting them know our organization is professionally run without undue political influence.”

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The title "Chief Executive Officer" better reflects the responsibilities of the position than the title "County Administrative Officer" because the position is truly that of an executive. The person in this position carries out the policies adopted by the Board of Supervisors, Ovitt said. The title is also consistent with the title used in five of California's eight largest counties. San Diego and Alameda will be the only two of the top eight that still have CAOs. Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Santa Clara, and Sacramento all have chief executive officers.

"We are a metropolis in the making and we need to prepare for our impending growth, re-designing ourselves to deal effectively with the complexity of issues we increasingly face," said Board of Supervisors Vice Chair Josie Gonzales. "Approving today's item sets clear direction as we move toward a more business-like style of government."