

NEWS

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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 18, 2013

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Board unanimously adopts terms for lawyers' union

SAN BERNARDINO – The Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously imposed arbitrator-endorsed terms on the county's public attorney's union, saving taxpayers an estimated \$3.6 million over the next 14 months and avoiding potential reductions in public service.

The county negotiated in good faith with the union for more than two years, even though most labor agreements are reached within six months.

The process included independent arbitration requested by the union, which concluded the county's offer was the best option for both sides and for the taxpayers. However, the union would not agree to bear the same sacrifices accepted by all other county employees during the current negotiating cycle to help avoid layoffs and preserve public service during the economic downturn.

Union president John Thomas addressed the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday and criticized the amount of public money spent on litigation, but then threatened to increase those costs by initiating "a long road of lawsuits" in an attempt to reverse the board's approval of fair contract terms.

He also threatened to lead a strike among the county's prosecuting attorneys and public defenders. "We're willing to go down that road. This isn't a threat," Thomas told the board. He acknowledged a union-led strike would compromise public safety in the county.