

PRESS ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Scott Vanhorne, (909) 387-4833



Supervisors Move to Establish Campaign Contribution Limits

SAN BERNARDINO – Sept. 27, 2011 – Today, the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors approved a proposal from Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford and Vice-Chairman Brad Mitzelfelt to move toward limiting how much money special interest groups, corporations, and others can donate to candidates seeking election to County offices.

“Large campaign contributions give the impression that donors can have undue influence on elected officials, and limiting those contributions can help restore public trust in San Bernardino County government, which has been beset with political scandals,” Rutherford said.

The Board’s unanimous vote gave County staff the green light to draft rules to regulate how much can be donated to candidates seeking County offices, including the Board of Supervisors, Sheriff, District Attorney, Assessor-Recorder, Auditor-Controller, and Superintendent of Schools. Supervisors directed staff to model the campaign finance limits after those in place for California Legislature candidates. The current limit is \$3,900 from a single source, including corporations, special interest groups, and individuals, per election cycle.

The Board also instructed staff to research how to enforce campaign finance regulations, including looking into the possibility of contracting with the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), which enforces the State’s campaign finance laws. Staff will also look into placing additional disclosure requirements on independent expenditure committees.

“Having an enforcement commission that is not appointed by elected officials in San Bernardino County provides a level of independence that is necessary,” Rutherford said. “The FPPC is credible, unbiased and has the necessary expertise to oversee the ethical implications of money in politics.”

The 2008-2009 San Bernardino County Grand Jury recommended establishing “reasonable” campaign contribution limits from individuals and groups to restore trust in County government and to create a level playing field in the local political arena. According to the Grand Jury’s report, Supervisors and other candidates for County offices received more than \$2.2 million in contributions each year between 2003 and 2008.

Earlier this year, Rutherford created an Ethics Advisory Working Group made up of former elected officials and local civic leaders to consider and recommend ways to improve ethical accountability in San Bernardino County government. The group agreed that the Board of Supervisors should consider implementing campaign finance rules.

“Listening to the group’s thoughtful discussions about the pros and cons of campaign finance rules helped convince me that it’s time to place a cap on political contributions in San Bernardino County,” Rutherford said.

###