

San Diego Newsline

Downtown San Diego news — the budget, public safety, business, and the civic life of America's Finest City

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COUNTY

Two County Programs Win Challenge Awards



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An innovative program that offers \$100,000 grants for 20 small nonprofit businesses and another that helps incarcerated caregivers read books to their children were honored with California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Challenge Awards.

The Challenge Awards spotlight creative programs and services offered by California Counties that are effective and cost-saving. This year, CSAC honored 16 programs from 11 different counties. San Diego County and Nevada County tied for the second most awards with two wins. The top contender was Riverside County with three awards.

The County of San Diego Office of Equity and Racial Justice launched the Equity Impact Grant Program , which selects 20 small nonprofits for the unrestricted operating grants, and provide coaching and training to seek additional funding opportunities. This program has created additional opportunities for grassroots and small organizations led by individuals from Black Indigenous People of Color communities who often face many barriers in securing funding. The new program gave out its first 10 grants in May 2024 and those recipients have reported that the grants are helping them continue their work and amplify its impact. The second round of 10 grants were awarded in December.

The San Diego County Library's Raising a Reader workshops program is geared toward

incarcerated adults with a child up to 5 years old. Library staff go into the women's incarceration and re-entry facility to provide a curriculum in early literacy that encourages them to read to their children and educates them about the lifelong benefits of literacy and library services. As a bonus, the caregiver picks two free children's books to practice reading while incarcerated that they can take them home upon their release. The workshops are voluntary and are held monthly. This program addresses the high functional literacy rate among juveniles who interact with the court and the issue of generational incarceration since children of incarcerated parents are six times more likely to become incarcerated themselves.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 13, 2025

COUNTY

Applicants Needed for Citizens Law Enforcement Review Board

The County's Citizens Law Enforcement Review Board is taking applications to fill an opening on its board.

CLERB was established in 1990 to investigate citizen complaints against San Diego County Sheriff's deputies and probation officers.

The vacancy is for the at-large seat which is open to any eligible resident in the county.

The 11 members of CLERB include two from each of the five supervisorial districts and one seat chosen at large from any of the districts. The County Board of Supervisors appoints CLERB members for staggered three-year terms beginning on July 1 and ending on June 30.

CLERB also investigates deaths in

connection with the actions of sworn deputies and probation officers. The review board makes advisory findings on complaints and recommends policy and procedure changes to the Sheriff, Chief Probation Officer and the Board of Supervisors.

Must be a registered voter in San Diego County.

Cannot currently hold a position as a sworn law enforcement officer.

Serve a three-year term for no more than two consecutive full terms.

Attend a regular CLERB meeting or watch a past meeting prior to applying for the vacant seat.

Must complete a training course within three months of the appointment.

The first review of applications will begin Jan. 30. People who submitted a CLERB application within the past 12 months still have their application on file with the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors and will be considered for the opening, so they do not need to reapply.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 9, 2025

COUNTY

Board Supervisors Formally Call District One Special Election

The Board of Supervisors made it official Tuesday and called an April 8 special primary election for the First Supervisorial District. Voters in District 1 will fill a supervisorial seat that became vacant when the former supervisor ended her tenure on Jan.6.

Over 376,000 voters living in District 1 will receive a ballot in the mail the week of March 10 for the election. The official ballot packet will also include an "I Voted" sticker, voting instructions and other important election information.

The person elected will fill District 1's

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Board Supervisors Formally Call District One Special Election

vacant seat for the remainder of the current term ending in January 2029. If no candidate receives a majority vote at the April 8 election, the top two vote-getters will move on to the special general election held on July 1, 2025. Only those who live in the district can vote in the election.

District 1 spans from the Pacific Ocean on the west to the Otay and San Miguel mountains in the east, and from Barrio Logan in the north to the U.S./Mexico international border on the south. The First Supervisorial District includes the cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City and some communities within the City of San Diego, such as Barrio Logan, East Village, Golden Hill and more. Additionally, District 1 includes the unincorporated areas of Bonita, East Otay Mesa, Lincoln Acres, Sunnyside and La Presa.

If you're not sure whether you reside in District 1, you can look it up at sdvote.com.

Early voting begins Monday, March 10 at the Registrar of Voters office in Kearny Mesa. Hours run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. However, the Registrar encourages voters to take advantage of the convenience of voting by mail.

You can vote at home and return your voted ballot through the mail – no postage needed – or to any of the Registrar's 26 official ballot drop boxes around the district starting Tuesday, March 11 through Election Day.

If you want to vote in person, you can avoid long lines by taking advantage of early voting. Starting Saturday, March 29, seven vote centers will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. until Election Day, Tuesday, April 8, when 13 vote centers will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Learn more about voting in the District 1 special primary election at sdvote.com or call (858) 565-5800 or toll free at (800) 696-0136.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 14, 2025

COUNTY

VIDEO: New, One-Stop Shop for County Services in Ramona

The new Ramona Community Resource Center is open, providing those in the area with a one-stop place with access to many County services like mental health, nutrition, and healthcare.

The \$15 million facility replaces one that had been in operation since 1988. Centrally located on the corner of 12 th and Main Streets, the facility is next to a County library branch. A 100-unit senior affordable housing complex on the property is being planned and should be up and running in the coming years.

The center is expected to see around 6,000 visits in the next year. Nearly 9,000 people in the community are now receiving County services, including CalFresh and medical assistance.

The state-of-the-art building includes new services to better support Ramona residents, including services for older adults and veterans. It was planned and built with input from the community and includes a conference room that is available for the community to reserve upon request.

A dream 25 years in the making, the County Board of Supervisors took the first step and approved the purchase of land from the California Department of Transportation in 2017. A design-build contract was awarded to Nielsen Construction in 2022 and the County worked with Sillman Architects on what the center would look like. The County broke ground on the project in June 2023.

The one story, 7,300 square foot building is designed to reflect the community and its residents and includes public art.

The center achieves a gold standard rating in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) from the U.S. Green Building Council. The building is also zero net energy, meaning it will generate more energy from the solar panels on its roof than it consumes each year. It also achieved a 30% reduction in embodied carbon which helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Ramona Community Resource Center is part of the County's work to expand accessibility, equitably across the region. Local business, small businesses, and disadvantaged businesses participated in its construction, including in the excavation and earthwork, fire protection, framing and door hardware, material supplies, and artwork.

Since 2020, the County has opened two other new resource centers, the North Coastal Live Well Center in November 2020, and the Southeastern Live Well Center in July 2023.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 14, 2025

COUNTY

Suicide Report Shows Small Increase in Suicide Deaths Overall, but Youth High Risk

The number of confirmed suicide deaths in San Diego County in 2023 was 363, a 1 percent increase from the 359 deaths the previous year, and a 6 percent increase since 2021.

Overall, from 2019 to 2023, the suicide death rate has been trending down, with a 12 percent decrease in deaths. These numbers do not include individuals who attempted suicide and survived.

County Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer and Behavioral Health Services Director Luke Bergmann, shared the updated information today at the San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council's annual Report to the Community press conference.

The report is a compilation of the most recent data on suicide in the County. Suicide rates are determined by the number of deaths per 100,000 population. Because it takes time to gather the data, the results are generally a year behind.

Broken down by demographics, suicide death rates in 2023 were highest among male residents, aged 65 or older, Non-Hispanic White, or living in East Region which geographically had the highest rate of suicide death in our county.

Firearms accounted for more than half the deaths by suicide for people 65 years and up. Firearms were also the most common method of death for males.

"We want everyone in San Diego County to know that you, personally, have the power to start a conversation about suicide and even help to prevent one. Use this action plan to get informed and learn how to make a difference," said Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer, Vice Chair of the Board of Supervisors. "Guns are the most-reported form of suicide in our region, so the Board of Supervisors will continue to pursue common-sense regulations like safe gun storage, so firearms are secured and less likely to fall into the wrong hands."

From 2022 to 2023, youth aged 10 to 24 experienced a 56 percent increase in suicide rates.

In November, 2024, the County's Behavioral Health Services began deploying Mobile Crisis Response Teams to school districts across San Diego County. The

Helping, Engaging, Reconnecting, and Educating (HERE) Now program has reached more than 3,800 students providing suicide risk assessments and interventions.

The county's suicide data reinforces the ongoing need to promote education, training, wellness and recovery to reduce suicides and the devastating impact they have on our communities.

The SPC offers suicide prevention trainings on how to best recognize warning signs, provide resource information, and assist their loved ones through open and direct communication. Learn more about these cost-free trainings at www.SPCSanDiego.org.

Suicide can be prevented. If you or a loved one are in need of support, please call seven days a week/24 hours a day the Access & Crisis Line (ACL) at 888-724-7240. You don't need to be in crisis to call. You can also request an MCRT at this phone number.

Counselors offer support and resources if you are in crisis, just need to talk, or have questions on how to offer support to someone else. The line is free, confidential, and assistance is available in over 200 languages. You can also call the national Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 13, 2025

COUNTY

First Local Detection of Hantavirus in 2025

A deer mouse collected on Jan. 3, 2025, in Cuyamaca Rancho State Park, has tested positive for the potentially deadly hantavirus.

Finding hantavirus in wild rodents is not uncommon in San Diego County, there were a total of 25 cases in 2024. However, people rarely come into direct contact with infected animals because wild rodents naturally avoid humans.

While exposure to hantavirus is rare, people should be careful around wild rodents as there is no cure or vaccine for hantavirus.

Symptoms of hantavirus usually develop between 1 to 8 weeks after exposure and include:

If you think that you may have been exposed to hantavirus, seek medical attention immediately.

People can be exposed to hantavirus when wild rodents invade their living area. Infected rodents shed the virus in their urine, feces and saliva. Once the matter dries, it can be stirred into

the air where people could inhale the virus.

If people find wild rodents, nests or signs of them in their living spaces, they should always use "wet cleaning" methods — using bleach or other disinfectants, rubber gloves and bags. They should NOT sweep or vacuum, which could stir hantavirus into the air where it could be inhaled.

Seal up all external holes in homes, garages, and sheds larger than a dime to keep rodents from getting in.

Eliminate rodent infestations immediately.

Avoid rodent-infested areas and do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with rodent poop and urine.

Clean up rodent poop and urine using the "wet cleaning" methods described below.

Ventilate the affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes before starting to clean.

Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution or other disinfectants onto dead rodents, rodent poop, nests, contaminated traps and surrounding areas, then let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning.

Clean with a sponge or a mop that has been soaked in disinfectant.

Place disinfected rodents and debris into two plastic bags, seal them and discard them in the trash.

Wash gloves in a bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method.

Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 13, 2025

COUNTY

County Offices to Close for Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

All public San Diego County offices, family resource centers, library branches and animal shelters will be closed Monday, Jan. 20 in observance of Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Law enforcement, emergency animal control response, and other essential services will continue through the holiday.

County parks, campgrounds and neighborhood day-use parks remain open 365 days a year. However, the following locations will be closed:

4S Ranch Recreation Office only (all parks will be open)

Valley Center Community

Continued on page 3

DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY (CONTINUED)

COURTS · TRANSIT · PUBLIC SAFETY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

County Offices to Close for Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

Hall and Adams Park Pool

Camping reservations can always be made online at the County's Online Camping

Reservations web page , but the Department of Parks and Recreation's reservation phone line will not be staffed

during the holiday.

All County public health clinics will be closed Monday.

All County offices will

resume normal business hours Tuesday, Jan. 21.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 15, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



BUSINESS

Member Spotlight: Sunnyside Veterans Consulting

Sunnyside Veterans Consulting is a medical consulting firm that assist veterans across the Nation with VA Disability Compensation Claims. Founded in 2020, by Lude Ricard, MSPT CES. Lude transitioned from owning a successful physical therapy practice to dedicating her full energy and talent helping veterans win their disability claims against the Veterans' Affairs. Sunnyside Veterans

Consulting is comprised of medical doctors, clinical psychologists, podiatrist, audiologists, and orthopedic clinicians who are skillful at writing expert medical opinions letters also known as "Nexus Letters" which serve as a powerful tool for veterans seeking VA Disability benefits. A well-crafted nexus letter can significantly strengthen your claim and provide the medical evidence to link your claim/condition to military service.

With a highly success rate (> 94%), the team of clinicians at Sunnyside Veterans Consulting (www.sunnysidevets.com) work diligently and expertly to ensure that a veteran's claim or condition ultimately gets approved. SVC's mission is "To Help veterans obtain

the maximum VA Disability Rating they earn and deserve."

To learn more about our organization, please visit: <https://www.sunnysidevets.com>

Call our Office (858)- 547-9101. Text (619) 621-9215

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jan 15, 2025

BUSINESS

Start 2025 Strong: January IOP Enrollment Open!

Looking for convenient, high-quality mental health care? Thousand Branches Wellness in beautiful Mission Valley is here for you! Our IOP program is designed with convenient daytime hours to fit your schedule while offering exceptional care to help you achieve balance and

wellness in the new year.

Flexible Scheduling : Our program is available Monday through Friday, from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM, allowing clients to select three consecutive days each week to attend, with both virtual and in-person options.

Comprehensive Services: We specialize in evidence-based practices like DBT and CBT, offering therapy for anxiety, depression, PTSD, and more.

Experienced Team: Our compassionate professionals are committed to your journey, providing support every step of the way.

In-network with Major Health Plans: Welcoming Aetna, Blue Cross, and Blue Shield members, with additional major insurance plans pending approval. We

offer support navigating self-pay options and out-of-network coverage, when applicable.

Convenient location: Centrally located in Mission Valley, with easy access to all major freeways, making us the perfect option for those commuting from anywhere in San Diego County.

Beautiful Facility: Experience treatment in a serene, welcoming environment that promotes healing and growth.

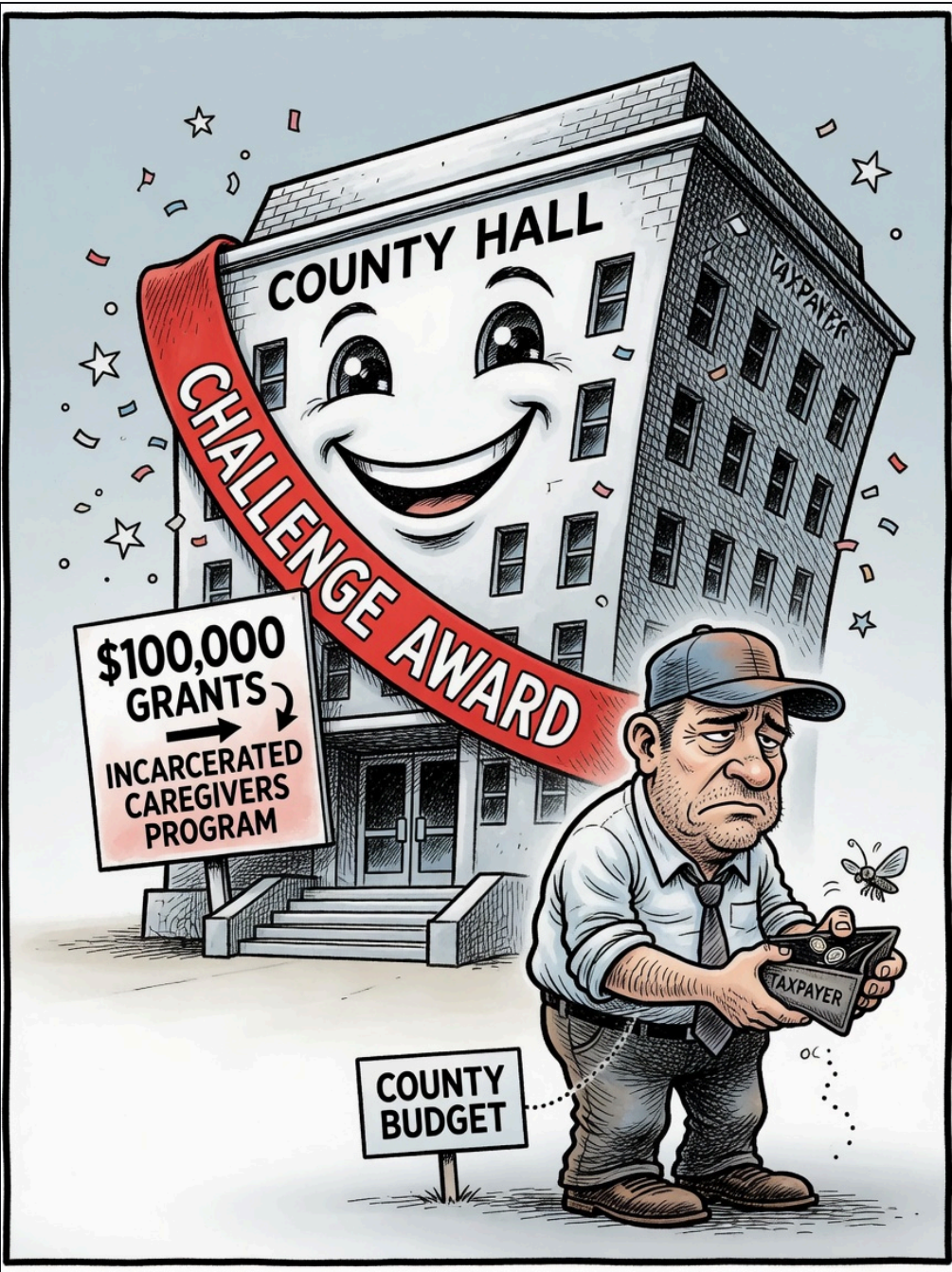
Don't wait to prioritize your mental health. Let us help you start the year with a plan for growth, balance, and success!

Call us today at 619.202.8586 to secure your spot!

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jan 6, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



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COMMENTARY

Opinion — the views of the writers named, not news reporting

COMMENTARY

California's Fuel Tax System Delivers Record Revenue While Burdening Drivers, Oil Industry Expert Says

Truman Angell contends that the state's current per-gallon fuel tax has generated far more money than the previous sales-tax approach, creating a steady revenue stream that benefits government at the expense of average residents.

California collected record amounts from its gasoline taxes in 2024, according to data released by the U.S. Census Bureau in December,

Truman Angell reports.

If motorists purchase similar volumes of fuel in the final months as they did in late 2023, the state will pull in more than \$10 billion for 2024. Final figures will not appear for several months, but lower pump prices since summer make reduced consumption unlikely, Angell writes.

The state now imposes the nation's highest fuel taxes at 60 cents per gallon plus an additional 2.25 cents per dollar of sales. This structure took effect in 2010 with the stated goal of dedicating all revenue strictly to roads and

bridges.

Voters received assurances that the new system would match the revenue produced under the pre-2010 sales tax method. That commitment held during the Brown administration.

Since 2019, however, excise tax collections have surpassed the old sales tax totals and have now diverged sharply. Sticking with the former sales tax would have yielded less than \$8 billion this year.

Angell, an oil industry expert, explains that the fixed per-gallon tax guarantees government income

regardless of how low fuel prices fall at the pump.

Angell contends that Gov. Newsom has every reason to pursue policies and regulatory pressure that suppress fuel prices while steering public frustration toward oil companies rather than toward state officials or the tax structure itself.

This approach, Angell writes, functions as "a cruel tax scheme that only punishes average Californians."

The commentary concludes that the current fuel tax regime delivers reliable billions to

Sacramento no matter market conditions, leaving ordinary drivers to shoulder the burden of the highest fuel taxes in the United States.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jan 14, 2025

ABOUT THIS PAPER

San Diego Newsline covers downtown San Diego first — City Hall, the Gaslamp Quarter, East Village, Little Italy, Barrio Logan and the waterfront — and the county around it. Every item names its source; read the originals and our standards at sandiegonewsline.com.

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