

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

Starting Saturday, Seven Vote Centers Open for Special Primary Election



Illustration from a photo by Edward O'Connor (hober) · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

If you live in the County of San Diego's First Supervisorial District, you can cast your ballot early at any one of seven vote centers in the district starting Saturday, March 29. The vote centers will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. through Monday, April 7, at the locations below:

Bonita-Sunnyside Branch Library – Community Room

County of San Diego HHSA – Conference Room

Mountain View Community Center – Back Meeting Room

Spring Valley Community Center – Olsen Room

On the final day of voting, April 8, six more vote centers will open for a total of 13 locations and the hours will change to 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. You can find a vote center or an official ballot drop box near you inside your voter information pamphlet, or look up your pamphlet online with the View Voter Information Pamphlet (Sample Ballot) tool at sdvote.com.

Vote centers have replaced polling places and provide more services . You can:

Vote in person or drop off a mail-in ballot

Vote using an accessible ballot marking device

Receive assistance and voting materials in multiple languages

Register to vote or update your voter registration and vote on the same day

Voters can use a touch screen to make their selection on ballot

marking devices . When finished, the voter will print out the official ballot, review it, place it in a secrecy sleeve, and hand it to a poll worker to insert it in the ballot box to be counted at the Registrar's office. The ballot marking device does not store, tabulate or count any votes.

Remember that campaigning or electioneering within 100 feet of a vote center or official ballot drop box is not allowed. This includes the visible display or audible dissemination of information that advocates for or against any candidate on the ballot. Additionally, an individual may not circulate any petitions, including those for initiatives, referenda, recall or candidate nominations.

The person elected will fill the district's vacant seat for the remainder of the current term that ends 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 on July 1. Only those who live in the district can vote in the election.

District 1 runs from the Pacific Ocean 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 district includes the cities of Chula Vista, Imperial Beach, National City, and some communities within the City of San Diego, including Barrio Logan, East Village, Golden Hill and more. It also includes the unincorporated

areas of Bonita, East Otay Mesa, Lincoln Acres, Sunnyside and La Presa.

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

Don't delay! If you have been holding onto your ballot, act now. You can vote from home and return your ballot through the mail – no postage needed – or to any of the Registrar's 29 official ballot drop boxes around the district. Remember to sign and date your return ballot envelope. You must sign your return envelope for your vote to be counted.

The Registrar's official ballot drop boxes are open 24 hours a day up until 8 p.m. on the final day of voting, April 8. Visit sdvote.com to check the location list or the locator map to find a location near you.

The sooner the Registrar's office receives your ballot, the sooner it is processed for the first release of election night results.

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 · Mar 28, 2025

COUNTY

Registrar Reminds District One Voters to Vote Early for Special Primary Election

If you're a registered voter living in the County of San Diego's First Supervisorial District and haven't cast your ballot yet, you'll soon get a reminder that you have less than two weeks to vote in the April 8 special

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Registrar Reminds District One Voters to Vote Early for Special Primary Election

The Registrar sent over 345,000 reminder postcards to registered voters in District 1 who had not voted as of March 20.

The person elected will fill the district’s vacant seat for the remainder of the current term that ends 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 on July 1. Only those who live in the district can vote in the election.

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If you’re not sure if you live in District 1, you can look it up at sdvote.com .

Don’t delay! If you have been holding onto your ballot, act now. You can vote from home and return your ballot through the mail – no postage needed – or to any of the Registrar’s 29 official ballot drop boxes around the district. Remember to sign and date your return ballot envelope. You must sign your return envelope for your vote to be counted.

The Registrar’s official ballot drop boxes are open 24 hours a day up until 8 p.m. on the final day of voting, April 8. Visit sdvote.com to check the location list or the locator

map to find a location near you.

The sooner the Registrar’s office receives your ballot, the sooner it is processed for the first release of election night results.

Additional options to vote in person will begin Saturday, March 29, with the opening of seven vote centers . They will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. until the final day of voting, Tuesday, April 8, when 13 vote centers will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

You can find a vote center or an official ballot drop box near you inside your voter information pamphlet, or you can look up your pamphlet online with the View Voter Information Pamphlet (Sample Ballot) tool at sdvote.com.

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 · Mar 27, 2025

COUNTY County Leadership in Health and Human Services Inspires Next Generation

San Diego State University students and alumni had the opportunity to learn about career s in health and human services directly from experts with the County’s Health and Human Services Agency at a 3-day career fair . The event was held this week to inspire students and alumni to pursue careers in public service .

The career fair offered on-campus w orkshops, networking opportunities , and one-on-one access to leadership in the County’s Health and Human Services Agency. Se veral County executives , all SDSU grads , shared their personal career journey and described how the ir experiences at the County shaped them professionally.

“It is always exciting and inspiring to see the next generation of students who are passionate about public service,” said County Health and Human Services Director, Kimberly Giardina. “SDSU provides ideal candidates who live in San Diego and have personal connections to the communities and residents we serve.”

The County of San Diego and the Live Well Center for Innovation and Leadership , worked in partnership with SDSU’s College of Health and Human Services to host th e in augural event.

Th is collaboration between the County and the university started in 2022 , shar ing resources and expertise to develop students for impactful careers. It serves as a pipeline to connect students to jobs and strengthen the link between academia and practice . The partnership also help s San Diego retain local talent and build a diverse, competent and engaged health and human services workforce .

Nicole Magnuson is the Director of the Live Well Center for Innovation and Leadership. She is happy to see so many SDSU students go on to meaningful careers with the County, as well as other benefits of the program.

“Besides providing fulfilling careers, we collaborate on research and service that contributes to a healthy, equitable , safe and thriving region.” said Magnuson.

Learn more about the Live Well Center for Innovation and Leadership.

County of San Diego news release · Mar 28, 2025

COUNTY

Input Sessions to Guide New Behavioral Health Workforce Programs Planned Next Week

The County is taking the next step in its strategy to expand the region’s public behavioral health workforce to support the community.

Local organizations are asked to participate in input sessions next week to review upcoming contracting opportunities for new programs that will help bolster the workforce.

A workforce assessment completed in 2022 at the request of the County Board of Supervisors found that an additional 18,500 behavioral health workers will be needed to meet anticipated demand for mental health and substance use disorder (SUD) treatment services in the region by 2027.

Funding for these new programs is made possible through \$75 million from Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Innovation funding approved by California’s Mental Health Services Oversight and Accountability Commission to support a first-of-its-kind workforce development and retention program.

The San Diego-based Policy & Innovation Center is administering the County’s ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund and will host initial informational sessions for interested organizations and prospective program participants.

The Fund will support the establishment of four contracted programs:

Nurse Practitioner (NP) Expansion Program – supporting NP students in getting educational and clinical experience in public behavioral health settings.

Behavioral Health Apprenticeship Network Program – providing apprenticeships to help

individuals become substance use disorder (SUD) counselors, case managers, community health workers, and other in-demand roles.

Peer Support Training Grant Program – training, placing, and retaining Peer Support Specialists.

Social Work, Counseling, and Therapy Internship Program – providing paid, high-quality internships in public behavioral health settings to master’s level social work, counseling, and therapy students.

These programs will provide and enhance the skills of current and prospective professionals interested in supporting the community by working in local public behavioral health.

Eight virtual input sessions will take place from Tuesday, April 1 through Friday, April 4, with two sessions for each program listed above. Learn more about the programs and how to participate on the County’s Behavioral Health website .

The ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund will support qualifying students, current behavioral health professionals, and others with lived mental health and substance use experience in accessing training or going back to school to advance their degrees.

The program is anticipated to support about 2,800 people over five years, filling critical positions and supporting retention within the local behavioral health continuum of care. Funding may be available by this fall in alignment with the new school year.

If you or a loved one is in need of behavioral health support, learn how you can get help. Call 9-8-8 or 1-888-724-7240 to speak to a trained specialist.

County of San Diego news release · Mar 28, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



Illustration from a photo by Sgt. Lillian Stephens · Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight: Veterans Village of San Diego– Serving Those Who Served Our Nation

Since 1981, Veterans Village of San Diego (VVSD) has been

a beacon of hope and transformation for thousands of veterans facing homelessness and other barriers to stability. With a mission to “Leave No One Behind,” VVSD provides a comprehensive range of integrated services that support veterans on their path to self-sufficiency, wellness, and long-term stability.

VVSD operates a nationally recognized continuum of care that includes transitional housing, permanent supportive

housing, mental health services, and employment readiness programs. The organization also offers specialized services such as Bridge Housing for veterans preparing for permanent placement and the Special Needs Program for Frail and Elderly Veterans. Veterans also have access to wraparound resources, including financial assistance, childcare support, rent and utility aid, transportation, food, clothing, and more.

VVSD’s primary campus is

located at 4141 Pacific Highway, San Diego, and its services extend to multiple sites across the region. In partnership with the Cohen Veterans Network (CVN), VVSD also operates mental health clinics in San Diego, Oceanside, and Los Angeles, offering confidential, high-quality care for veterans and their families.

In addition to supportive services, VVSD provides permanent housing solutions, including Vet Villas, a 52-unit apartment complex in Escondido

offering 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom homes for veterans and their families. VVSD also manages a 7-unit furnished apartment complex in San Diego for veterans transitioning into permanent housing.

VVSD is also known for hosting the renowned annual Stand Down event, a two-day intervention that connects homeless and at-risk veterans with a wide array of essential services in a single location. These services include:

Housing assistance (transitional, bridge, and

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BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

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Member Spotlight: Veterans Village of San Diego– Serving Those Who Served Our Nation

permanent) Employment assistance and job skills training

To learn more about Veterans Village of San Diego, visit www.vvvsd.net or call 619-393-2000.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Mar 27, 2025

BUSINESS President Trump’s Cabinet

Since November, U.S. Senate has been working on confirming the President’s executive and judicial nominations. As of now, the following members have been confirmed :

With unanimous support, Secretary of State, Marco Rubio

Secretary of Agriculture, Brooke Rollins

Secretary of Health & Human Services, Robert F.

Kennedy Jr. Secretary of Homeland Security, Kristi Noem

Secretary of Housing & Urban Development, Scott Turner

Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Doug Collins

Small Business Administrator, Kelly Loeffler

Central Intelligence Agency Director, John Ratcliffe

Office of Management and Budget Director, Russell Vought

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator, Lee Zeldin

Office of National Intelligence Director, Tulsi Gabbard

United States Trade Representative, Jamieson Greer

Deputy Secretary of the State, Christopher Landau

Members still pending confirmation hearings are:

Elise Stefanik to be U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations

Rodney Scott to be

Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection

Brandon Williams to be Under Secretary for Nuclear Security under the Department of Energy

Stephen Vaden to be Deputy Secretary of Agriculture

Dean Sauer to be Solicitor General of the United States under the Department of Justice

Michael Rigas to be Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources

Aaron Reitz to be Assistant Attorney General

Mehmet Oz to be Administrator of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

James O’Neill to be Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services

Janette Nesheiwat to be Medical Director in the Regular Corps of the Public Health Service

Emil Michael to be Under Secretary of Defense for

Research and Engineering

Troy Meink to be Secretary of the Air Force

Mark Meador to be Federal Trade Commissioner (term of seven years)

Martin Makary to be Commissioner of Food and Drugs for the Department of Health and Human Services

William Long to be Commissioner of Internal Revenue

Luke Lindberg to be Under Secretary of Agriculture for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs

Scott Kupor to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management

Jare Isaacman to be Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Jacob Helberg to be Under Secretary of State (Economic Growth, Energy, and the Environment)

Preston Griffith to be Under Secretary of Energy

Dario Gil to be Under Secretary for Science for the

Department of Energy

Paul Atkins to be Member of the Securities and Exchange Commission

David Fink to be Administrator of the Federal Railroad Administration

Michael Faulkender to be Deputy Secretary of the Treasury

Michael Duffy to be Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment

Harmeet Dhillon to be Assistant Attorney General

Elbridge Colby to be Under Secretary of Defense for Policy

Samuel Brown to be Under Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Memorial Affairs

James Bishop to be Deputy Director of the Office of Management and Budget

Jayanta Bhattacharya to be Director of the National Institutes of Health

Keith Bass to be Assistant Secretary of Defense

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Mar 25, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



Another election, another expense

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

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COMMENTARY

COMMENTARY

Lance Christensen: CEQA Has Become a Costly Barrier to California’s Growth

The California Policy Center senior fellow argues that the landmark environmental law now blocks housing, businesses, hospitals, schools, factories and economic progress while serving as a tool for political obstruction.

Californians are likely to hear a great deal more about the California Environmental Quality Act, known as CEQA, in the days ahead, according to Lance Christensen, senior fellow at the California Policy Center.

Signed into law in 1970 by then-Gov. Ronald Reagan to allow public input on large government projects, the statute has evolved over a half-century into a complex web of regulation that Christensen describes as “green tape.”

Christensen argues that CEQA now functions as a major obstacle to constructing homes, businesses, hospitals, schools and factories across the state.

At its heart, the law requires agencies to identify significant environmental impacts of proposed projects and to avoid or mitigate those impacts when feasible. Yet Christensen writes that the costs of these mandates frequently exceed any benefits and cannot be justified within a business plan.

The result, he contends, is that building or rebuilding anything larger than a lemonade stand demands navigation of endless bureaucratic requirements that may not even improve environmental outcomes.

While people should be responsible stewards of the environment, Christensen insists this responsibility should not come at the expense of denying Californians places to live and work. “CEQA was made for man, not man for CEQA,” he writes.

Environmental impact reports, or EIRs, are required for most projects, even to establish that a project is exempt. These studies begin at \$150,000 and grow more expensive with project size.

They routinely take at least 18 months to complete, often rendering developments financially unviable before construction can begin.

Developers regularly encounter litigation threats under CEQA that force delays or outright cancellation of projects, even after EIR approval. Courts compound the difficulty by postponing hearings, demanding extra documentation or granting standing to outside parties.

Christensen notes that organized labor has used CEQA as “greenmail” to extract union agreements from contractors. NIMBY activists and “BANANA” (build absolutely nothing, anytime, near anything) groups exploit the law’s ambiguous standards to block affordable housing, gas station expansions, urban infill and other projects they dislike.

These opponents, often the most recent arrivals in a neighborhood, use coordinated campaigns and frivolous lawsuits to obstruct development, the senior fellow writes.

Reform efforts have stalled because powerful interests in Sacramento — environmental organizations, labor unions and NIMBY groups — treat even modest changes as attacks on environmental integrity. The majority party fears alienating these allies, Christensen explains.

He maintains that California can protect the environment without clinging to outdated, Byzantine rules. Solutions include broader exemptions, master plan reviews, expanded ministerial approvals, faster legal appeals, a loser-pays system for frivolous suits, better use of technology, newer environmental processes, stronger property rights and markets for negative externalities.

Only 16 states have adopted versions of CEQA or the federal National Environmental Policy Act. The other 34 states lack such stringent laws yet are not experiencing ecological collapse. Instead, those states are attracting more population growth as people move to places where they

can flourish.

Without addressing CEQA’s role, California’s housing shortage, infrastructure deficits and economic stagnation will continue, Christensen warns. Reforming the law is not about eliminating environmental safeguards but about preventing its abuse as a political weapon.

He concludes that reform will remain impossible unless courageous legislators tackle the work their predecessors avoided. Without change, Los Angeles and other parts of the burned-out state will never be rebuilt in our lifetimes.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Mar 31, 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.

MORE NEWS

COUNTY

County Kicks Off 41st Annual Blood Drive

One in seven people hospitalized need blood and blood banks supplying those hospitals often face shortages.

To help meet the community’s critical need for donations, the County of San Diego has hosted an annual springtime blood drive for the past 41 years, impacting more than 60,000 lives.

The month-long event kicked off Tuesday outside the downtown County Administration Center with the San Diego Blood Bank’s mobile donation center as a backdrop.

County Chief Medical Officer Dr. Jennifer Tuteur described the annual drive’s importance.

“As a family physician, I have seen many lives saved with blood transfusions—including babies in the NICU, trauma victims and those being treated for cancer,” said Dr. Tuteur. “I have witnessed how donated blood saves lives and believe the act of donating is one of the greatest gifts you can give.”

Only 3% of people in the

United States donate blood each year, according to America’s Blood Centers , which leads to ongoing shortages.

The County works with the San Diego Blood Bank, a Live Well San Diego partner, to create a year-round supply of donated blood through the Community Guardians Program.

The Guardians program includes about a dozen organizations that advocate for blood donations and engage diverse audiences across San Diego. In the past nine months, its members reached out to over 110,000 people through social media, websites, email and other methods.

The County’s annual blood drive is among the largest collection events organized by the San Diego Blood Bank. Both County and non-County employees are welcome to sign up and donate.

Blood Drives at County of San Diego Locations by Region

Below is a list of locations, organized by region to book an appointment :

HCDS – HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES | BOOK NOW WED, APR 9 | 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | Parked Curbside, 3989 Ruffin Rd., San Diego, CA 92123

COUNTY OPERATIONS CENTER THURS, APR 10 | 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | BOOK NOW TUES, APR 29 | 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | BOOK NOW Main Entrance Cul de Sac, 5560 Overland Ave., San Diego, CA 92123

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING | BOOK NOW TUE, APR 15 | 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Parking Lot, 8911 Balboa Ave., San Diego, CA 92112

SHERIFF HEADQUARTERS | BOOK NOW WED, APR 16 | 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | Parking Lot, 9621 Ridgehaven, San Diego, CA 92123

SEVILLE PLAZA | BOOK NOW THUR, APR 17 | 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | Visitor Parking Lot, 5469 Kearny Villa Rd., San Diego, CA 92123

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CENTER | BOOK NOW TUES, APR 22 | 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. | Parking Lot, 2901 Meadow Lark Dr., San Diego, CA 92123

NORTH CENTRAL FRC | BOOK NOW TUES, APR 22 | 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. | Parking Lot, 5055 Ruffin Rd., San

Diego, CA 92123

SAN DIEGO SUPERIOR COURT | BOOK NOW WED, APR 2 | 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. | Parked in front of Hall of Justice, 330 W. Broadway, San Diego, CA 92101

EAST PUBLIC HEALTH CENTER | BOOK NOW TUES, APR 8 | 8 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. | Parking Lot, 367 N. Magnolia Ave., El Cajon, CA 92020

LAKESIDE LIBRARY| BOOK NOW TUES, APR 8 | 3:30 p.m. – 6 p.m. | 9839 Vine St, Lakeside, CA 92040

JULIAN LIBRARY | BOOK NOW WED, APR 9 | 12 p.m. – 5 p.m. | 1850 Highway 78, Julian, CA 92036

LEMON GROVE FRC | BOOK NOW WED, APR 16 | 10 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. | Parking Lot, 7065 Broadway, Lemon Grove, CA 91945

EDGEMOOR HOSPITAL | BOOK NOW THUR, APR 17 | 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | Parking Lot, 655 Park Center Dr., Santee, CA 92071

FALLBROOK COMMUNITY CENTER | BOOK NOW THURSDAY, APR 3 | 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 pm | Parking Lot, 341 Heald Ln., Fallbrook, CA 92028

NORTH COASTAL FRC | BOOK NOW FRI, APR 4 | 8

a.m. – 1:30 p.m. | 3708 Ocean Ranch Blvd., Oceanside, CA 92056

NORTH INLAND LIVE WELL CENTER | BOOK NOW THURS, APR 17 | 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Parking Lot, 649 W. Mission Ave., Escondido, CA 92025

SOUTH REGION LIVE WELL CENTER | BOOK NOW WED, APR 9 | 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. | Parking Lot, 690 Oxford St., Chula Vista, CA 91911

SOUTH REGION LIVE WELL CENTER | BOOK NOW WED, APR 16 | 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | Parking Lot, 401 Mile of Cars Way, National City, CA ,91950

PROBATION – SOUTH BAY REGION | BOOK NOW WED, APR 16 | 9 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. | Parking Lot, 1095 Bay Blvd., Chula Vista, CA 91911

SELWC – SOUTHEASTERN LIVE WELL CENTER| BOOK NOW FRI, APR 18 | 10:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. | 5101 Market Street, San Diego, CA, 92114

SAN DIEGO SUPERIOR COURT – SOUTH COUNTY DIVISION | BOOK NOW TUES, APR 22 | 9 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. | Parking Lot, 500 Third Ave., Chula Vista, CA 91910

County of San Diego news release · Apr 1, 2025

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