

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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DOWNTOWN

San Diego's New Agreement with Caltrans



Illustration from a photo by JiriMatejcek · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0

In July 2025, the City of San Diego and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) launched a one-year, first-of-its-kind pilot agreement to address homelessness along state-owned freeways near downtown. This partnership authorizes city crews and law enforcement to clear encampments on a five-mile stretch covering I-5, SR-163, and SR-94 including neighborhoods such as Little Italy, East Village, and Barrio Logan.

The program enables outreach teams to connect individuals with shelter and housing resources while removing trash and debris to improve safety and public health. Caltrans will reimburse the city up to \$400,000 for cleanup and outreach efforts and encourages better coordination across state and local agencies. The initiative aligns with Governor Newsom's model encampment ordinance and San Diego's "unsafe camping ordinance," which has already contributed to a significant reduction in downtown homelessness—from 2,104 individuals in May 2023 to 756 in June 2025. Executive Director of Public Affairs Justine Murray recently spoke in support of the agreement recently, emphasizing its potential to improve community safety and economic vitality by addressing homelessness in key urban corridors that have a direct effect on the local economy.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Aug 22, 2025



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COUNTY

County Seeks Applicants for Interim Treasurer-Tax Collector

Applications are open for the County's Interim County Treasurer-Tax Collector.

The County Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday on the process to appoint someone to fill the remainder of Treasurer-Tax Collector Dan McAllister's term following his retirement on Aug. 2.

In accordance with the County Charter and Board policies, the selected appointee will hold office until Jan. 4, 2027, when the newly elected County Treasurer-Tax Collector will begin a four-year term.

The application process for Interim Treasurer-Tax Collector will close on Sept. 22. The tax collector's side of the office oversees the collection of more than \$9.1 billion in property taxes every year, dealing with both secured property like buildings and unsecured property like boats, racehorses, etc.

The office also collects the transient occupancy tax and the cannabis business tax from establishments in unincorporated parts of the county.

On the treasury side, the office manages the County investment pool, which ranges in size from \$10.2 – \$18.8 billion in assets on an annual basis. The treasury is also the paying agent for all 42 school districts in the region.

Interested applicants for Interim County Treasurer-Tax Collector can

visit the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors' web page for the job description, criteria and application instructions. Applications must be submitted in person to the Clerk of the Board to verify the forms are complete.

be a registered voter of the County of San Diego

be a citizen of the United States and the State of California

meet the requirements of County Administrative Code Article L, Section 840 to hold office as the Treasurer-Tax Collector

not have been convicted of any crime disqualifying the applicant from holding elected office

formally assume the position within 20 business days of their appointment

The first round of interviews will take place during the regular Board of Supervisors meeting on Sept. 30. If the Board does not make an appointment, the Board will hold a second hearing on Oct. 21.

During the interviews, each applicant will have three minutes to present themselves to the Board of Supervisors. After the presentations, the Board may ask the applicants questions. The public will have an opportunity to speak at the hearing.

After this, the Board will vote to select the Interim Treasurer-Tax Collector. The appointee will need at least three votes. Once the decision is made, the appointee is scheduled to be sworn in on Oct. 21.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 27, 2025

COUNTY

County Offices to Close for Labor Day

To commemorate the Labor Day holiday, all public San Diego County offices, family resource centers, libraries and animal shelters will be closed Monday, Sept. 1.

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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County Offices to Close for Labor 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 Monday:

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

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, Sept. 2.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 26, 2025

COUNTY
County Creates New Small Business Opportunities

Small businesses in the region – take note. The County wants to buy more services and supplies from you. A lot more.

The County set a goal to direct 25% of its \$2.2 billion annual contract spending toward small businesses.

To reach that goal, the Board of Supervisors voted Tuesday to update the County’s policies to reduce barriers, increase access and make it easier for small and local businesses to successfully work with the County.

Raised the small local business preference from 5% to

15%, meaning a proposed bid price will be evaluated as if it were up to 15% cheaper, helping them better compete with larger companies

Expanded the use of simpler methods, such as Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) instead of Requests for Proposals. RFQs typically take about half the time to complete, speeding up the process

Formally recognized disadvantage business enterprises

Expanded the definition of small businesses from those with state certifications to include: Nonprofits

Veteran-owned and disabled veteran-owned businesses

Businesses with other small business certificates

Businesses that are not yet State certified but meet the state certification definition

A new business category was also added called Social Equity Enterprises (SEEs). These are organizations that try to advance equity by addressing economic, social and environmental disparities. They operate in or benefit historically underinvested communities.

Small businesses are often called the backbone of the local economy. The state estimates about 123,000 small businesses operate in our region, accounting for about 98% of all businesses.

Reaching the County goal to direct 25% of the \$2.2 billion annual contract spending to small businesses would boost the overall local economy by potentially keeping about \$550 million per year in the region.

The County had already taken steps to improve its

procurement system. Staff members asked more than 400 people and 22 organizations involved in non-profits, small businesses, economic development and business support for feedback.

As a result, the County is implementing several programs for small businesses, non-profits and community-based organizations interested in doing business with the County. The programs will help with:

Technical assistance to navigate the County’s BuyNet system and procurement

The County also began publicly posting the County’s contract and service needs for the next six months to help with small business response times.

Staff members will now undergo training on how to implement the new Board policies. As part of Tuesday’s Board action, staff will also receive clearer guidance on how to select products and vendors that are environmentally responsible.

The Board’s policy changes will go into effect on Sept. 25. Yearly progress reports will go before the Board beginning in September 2026.

For details on how to do business with the County, visit Purchasing and Contracting .

County of San Diego news release · Aug 26, 2025

COUNTY
New County Dashboard Shows Local Impact of Opioid and Drug Overdoses

As part of the County’s work to reduce the number of lives impacted by opioid and other drug overdoses, a newly

published dashboard is available that pulls together data from across the county.

The dashboard, developed by County Public Health, shows multi-year information on overdose deaths, emergency department visits and hospitalizations and calls to emergency response teams and poison control related to opioids. It also has data on how often naloxone (a life-saving medicine to treat an opioid overdose) was given to patients and demographic details.

The Overdose Surveillance Dashboard will be updated quarterly and is meant to provide a trend-focused view of the local impact of opioid and drug overdoses.

“This dashboard is part of the County’s Overdose Surveillance and Response program that is strengthening the region’s response to the ongoing overdose crisis,” said Dr. Erik A Berg, Assistant Medical Director for County public health epidemiology and immunization services. “This information is important to give a clear view into the scope of this crisis as we build awareness to prevent deaths.”

The County uses this information in real time to track overdose trends and pinpoint where resources are needed. Teams can be sent to affected areas with naloxone, fentanyl test strips and referrals to health and community services.

In recent years, these efforts, along with those of health, safety and community partners, have led to overdose deaths falling for the third year in a row, down 21 percent from 2023 to 2024. The new dashboard

complements the annual report card shared last week.

Local leaders highlighted this work and marked International Overdose Awareness Day recently at the County Administration Center with an annual observance commemorating the lives lost to overdose last year.

“The County continues to lead overdose prevention and treatment efforts, in collaboration with regional health-care providers, community organizations, and law enforcement, in order to save lives,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, County Public Health Officer. “We are making positive strides, but it is important to continue to raise awareness so that no more families are impacted by opioid and drug overdoses.”

Several locations across the county offer free naloxone kits. Locations can be found by using the interactive Substance Use and Medication Assistance Treatment and Naloxone Resource map .

Similarly, the interactive Prescription Drug Drop-Off Locator Map guides people to locations where they can safely dispose of unwanted medications.

Substance use treatment resources and support services are available by calling the San Diego Access Crisis Line at 1-888-724-7240 or the national Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988. These resources are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and can provide help in more than 150 languages.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 25, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



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BUSINESS
Meeting with CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott

Last week, the Chamber met with recently appointed CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott alongside some of our partners including the Small Business Development Center. Our business community elevated ongoing priorities such as advancing border efficiency, continued investment in technology, and fully staffing our air, sea, and land ports of entry. Board members Eduardo “Lalo” Acosta,

VP of R.L. Jones Customs Brokers, and Ernesto Bravo, President, TECMA West Division, stressed the need for clear and timely communication on tariff implementation which impact local businesses of all sizes and across industries. The Chamber is part of monthly stakeholder meetings with CBP Director of Field Operations for San Diego Sidney Aki and team, and we appreciate our partnership and communication channels which help inform our outreach efforts.

This past month, tariffs were implemented to over 90 countries ranging from 10% to much higher. Some countries like South Korea, the European Union, and Japan have reached trade deals with the U.S. yet have not been fully exempt from tariffs.

Other countries like Mexico and China were able to negotiate a 90-day extension to further negotiate trade deals that benefit both parties. Canada, on the other hand, was one of the first to receive tariffs on non-USMCA goods, while still working with the federal administration on a trade deal. Chamber President and CEO, Chris Cate participated at a press conference with Rep. Scott Peters and Rep. Sara Jacobs to highlight the economic impact that tariffs have on regional businesses and supply chains.

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

BUSINESS
News from Sacramento

In continuing efforts to elevate our region’s voice, Chamber’s President and CEO

Chris Cate participated in a panel discussion for the Assembly Select Committee on Asia/California Trade and Investment , chaired by Assemblymember Jessica Caloza. California exported over \$71B in goods to Asia last year, and San Diego’s top industries such as life sciences, clean tech, and semiconductors, continue to be at the frontlines of this exchange. The Select Committee will serve as a forum to explore strategies that promote trade, investment, and cooperation between California and key Asian partners including Japan, South Korea, India, and the Philippines. The Chamber has worked hard to build on these relationships. In recent years, we have met with leaders from many Asian countries including Japan, Vietnam, and South

Korea, engaging in conversations about shaping the future of our economy and ensuring that San Diego businesses are connected to opportunities to elevate their business.

Last week, Governor Gavin Newsom and California Democratic leaders publicly unveiled draft congressional maps and launched the “Election Rigging Response Act ” a proposed constitutional amendment to appear on the November 4 special-election ballot this fall. Governor Newsom framed the move as a defensive counter to Republican redistricting efforts in Texas, aiming to flip five GOP-held House seats while by-passing the state’s independent Citizens Redistricting Commission until 2030. That

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BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

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News from Sacramento requires going to the voters for their approval. If passed, the initiative would have a “trigger,” meaning the redrawn map would not take effect unless Texas or another GOP-led state moved forward with its own gerrymandering effort. Opposition is swiftly mobilizing, including former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger who recently called it a partisan power grab. The Chamber team has begun engaging in conversations with our partners across the state regarding the initiative and will continue to keep members updated as it moves forward in the coming

months. California is moving legislation forward to extend the Cap-and-Invest program, formerly named Cap-and-Trade, beyond its current 2030 sunset, aiming for reauthorization through 2045. Lawmakers are expected to introduce enabling bills before the end of the legislative session and will most likely vote on proposals in early September. In the proposed budget, Governor Newsom allocated \$1.5B to Cal Fire for wildfire response and \$1B annually to high-speed rail, drawing from Cap-and-Invest revenues, which are currently estimated at about \$4B. These allocations would

consume most of the available funds, sparking concerns from various groups across the state regarding reduced state support for clean transit, EV incentives, and infrastructure projects. Additionally, regulatory updates to tighten emission caps are still pending from the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and are expected later this year which presents even more uncertainty for Cap-and-Invest. The Chamber continues to monitor the legislative and regulatory actions affecting CARB throughout the remainder of the year and will engage in changes that affect our region.

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

BUSINESS

IPA Team in Tecate

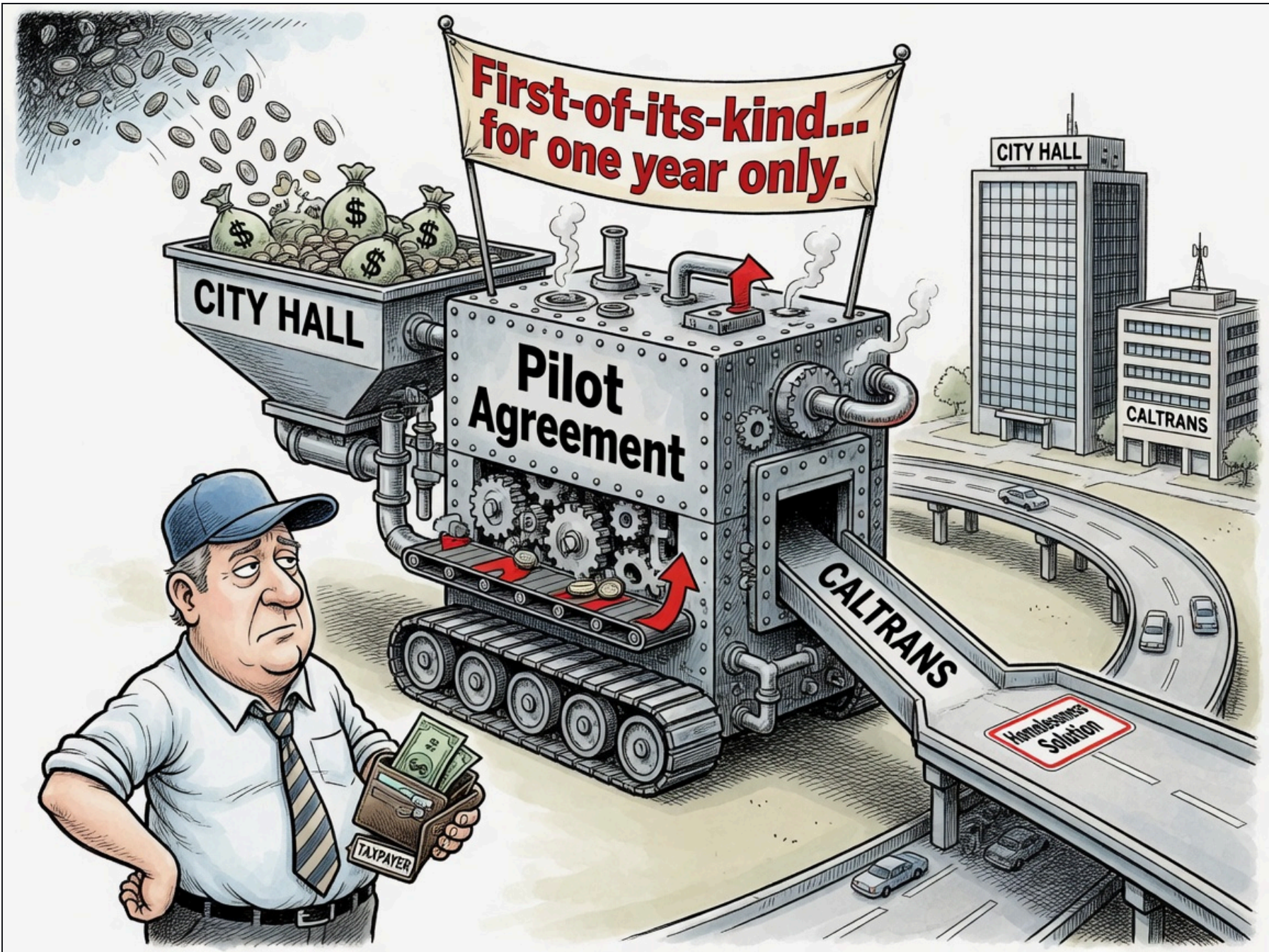
This month, the IPA team visited Tecate to further partnerships and strengthen our Cali-Baja region. The team started off the day meeting with Tecate Mayor Roman Cota, Councilmember Isaac Contreras, and members of the Tecate Business Council to discuss opportunities and challenges in the region. The Chamber used this opportunity to extend an invitation to join the Chamber’s annual bi-national delegation trip to Mexico City in October.

The meeting was followed by a tour of Chamber member Taylor Guitars where the team and Mayor Cota had the opportunity to learn about the manufacturing process, sustainability initiatives, and industry challenges. The team then toured AutoVacc Systems to learn about how this business builds to the regional and bilateral supply chains and the impact that trade wars has had to its manufacturing and delivery process. The Chamber looks to further advance regional priorities through these mutual collaborative efforts.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Aug 22, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



Same old spending, new freeway address.

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

Newsom’s Redistricting Move Called a Power Grab

The California Policy Center criticizes Governor Gavin Newsom for pushing a constitutional amendment to replace the independent redistricting commission with maps drawn by politicians, ahead of a costly special election.

California voters will have

the final say on November 4 about a constitutional amendment pushed by Gov. Gavin Newsom that would scrap the state’s independent redistricting commission and replace it with maps drawn by Democratic politicians, according to the California Policy Center.

The Center criticizes Newsom, who frequently labels President Donald Trump a “threat to democracy,” for

working to dismantle democratic processes in Sacramento. The source describes Newsom as the state’s Gaslighter-in-Chief.

Christensen said, “Newsom threw a grenade into California’s nonpartisan and independent redistricting process,” and “The people of California should not be held for ransom for the governor’s White House ambitions.”

The Center writes that

Newsom’s effort was triggered by Trump’s suggestion that Texas Republicans redraw their maps before the 2026 midterms. While Texas law allows such changes, California’s constitution explicitly prohibits it under Article XXI.

To circumvent that prohibition, Newsom has called a quarter-billion-dollar special election this November to amend the constitution while

advancing new congressional maps he hopes will be in place by next June, the Center reports.

Polling cited by the Center from POLITICO-Citrin Center-Possibility Lab shows the proposal is deeply unpopular. “By nearly a two-to-one margin, voters prefer keeping an independent line-drawing panel to determine the state’s House seats,” with support

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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

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Newsom’s Redistricting Move Called a Power Grab

among Republicans and Democrats “roughly equal.”

The Center reminds readers that California voters passed Proposition 11 in 2008 creating the commission for legislative districts, approved Proposition 20 in 2010 placing congressional map-drawing under the independent Citizens Redistricting Commission, and rejected Proposition 27 in 2010 by a 59-41 margin.

The 14-member commission includes five Democrats, five Republicans and four members affiliated with neither of the two top parties. It has produced maps after both the 2010 and 2020 censuses through a transparent process that invites public input and follows strict criteria including roughly equal

populations, contiguity, compactness, no discrimination on the basis of race or language, and respect for “communities of interest.”

Those communities are defined as groups sharing “common social or economic interests” such as urban, rural, industrial or agricultural areas, the Center explains. The maps signed by Newsom this week do the opposite, according to the Center, which quotes Christensen saying, “California Democrats already have a supermajority of the congressional delegation and state legislature, so the idea that they are splitting up communities of interest and other groups just so they can squeeze out more political power is really pathetic.”

Democrats introduced the necessary measures — ACA 8, AB 604 and SB 280 — using a “gut and amend” procedure that replaced the entire

content of existing bills. The Center notes this tactic allowed them to bypass the 30-day waiting period required by Article IV, Section 8(a) of the state constitution, a safeguard voters have repeatedly defended.

In 1962 the Legislature asked voters to shorten the waiting period to 20 days; voters rejected the idea 61-39. The Center’s California Justice Center issued a legal primer explaining that shortening the period requires a three-fourths supermajority in each chamber.

A legal challenge by Republican legislators reached the California Supreme Court, but on Aug. 20 six justices appointed by Democratic governors denied the petition. The Center observes that the bills, including the 256-page AB 604 filled with census block data, are nearly impossible for average

voters to analyze without specialized tools.

Questions remain about who actually drew the lines. Democratic committee chairs claimed it was not them, and Assembly Elections Chair Gail Pellerin compared the process to not needing to meet the chef at a restaurant, the Center reports. Christensen called the entire affair “a complete travesty.”

The special election is projected to cost over \$200 million and could exceed \$250 million when adjusted for inflation, according to CPC visiting fellow Marc Joffe. The Center questions why the majority party would spend such sums on what it calls a “vanity election” while the state faces budget deficits, wildfires, homelessness, crime, failing schools, jammed freeways, skyrocketing cost of living and a hostile business climate that recently prompted

Bed Bath & Beyond’s CEO to announce the company’s departure.

With only 74 days until the vote, the Center warns that the rushed process included 16,000 unread public comments, last-minute correction bills and backroom deals. Christensen said, “This whole thing has been about petty politics and power. It doesn’t serve Californians — it only serves Gavin’s ego.”

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Aug 22, 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

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY

New Guaranteed Income Program Supports High Risk Mothers and Babies

The County is partnering with the San Diego Foundation on a new guaranteed income program for high-risk pregnant women as part of a new initiative called Born Well.

Born Well is focused on improving birth outcomes for mothers and newborns in high-risk communities. The San Diego Foundation is committing \$1 million to support the public-private collaboration aimed at expanding access to prenatal and postpartum care, supporting service providers and strengthening coordination across agencies among other things.

The County is partnering on a portion of Born Well that focuses on a guaranteed income pilot program that will provide \$750 cash payments per month to 25 expectant mothers for one year. Participants will be referred

through the County’s Perinatal Equity Initiative program who are in their first or second trimester of pregnancy.

Guaranteed income programs provide direct, unconditional cash that gives families the freedom to spend money on their most immediate needs as they define them, such as food, childcare, medical needs or rent.

In San Diego County, babies in the highest risk groups can be six times more likely to die before they reach their first birthday and 60 percent more likely to be born premature than the lowest risk group. In California, high-risk mothers are also more than three times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes.

These disparities exist regardless of age, income or education and are linked to systemic barriers like unequal access to care, toxic stress and social and economic inequities.

“While we are seeing improvements in the number of

infant deaths in San Diego County overall, the rate of infant deaths in the highest-risk groups are still far above any other group,” said Liz Hernandez, Director of Public Health Services. “There is more work to be done to improve disparities. This guaranteed income program is one step in reducing barriers for pregnant women at risk, like financial worries.”

The County has been involved with other Guaranteed Income Programs in recent years. The Family Income for Empowerment Program started in April 2023 in partnership with Jewish Family Service. It serves low-income families referred by the County’s Child and Family Well-Being Department, providing \$500 a month for 24 months of unrestricted cash payments.

In total, more than 450 families have participated in the program in cohorts. Some families have started to transition out of the program. Final outcomes from these

cash payments will not be available until all families have completed the program but so far families have reported some positive changes. More families say they feel confident in their housing security. More families have also reported feeling like they can meet their monthly financial obligations.

Another County cash payment program was Recovery Action Fund for Tomorrow or RAFT, in partnership with Jewish Family Service. It provided one-time cash payments of \$4,000 to help more than 2,200 low-income families and seniors enduring financial fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Initial results from the program revealed that families were spending most of their money on housing. Additionally, 30 percent of funds spent by participants went to food and groceries, 23 percent to retail and sales (like Costco and Target), and 16 percent used it for

transportation, including buying gasoline.

The County’s Pilot Shallow Rental Subsidy Program , while not a guaranteed income program because payments go directly to landlords and are specific to housing, has provided nearly 400 older adults with \$500 monthly payments toward their rent for 18 to 30 months. The program started in early 2023 and expanded to add more participants last year. Some program participants have just begun to transition out of the program. All participants receive case management to help connect them to other resources.

The County’s Office of Evaluation, Performance, and Analytics is looking into how these programs impact people’s lives and well-being. Preliminary results for some programs could be available by the end of 2025.

County of San Diego news release · Aug 26, 2025

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