

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

County Public Safety Leader Recognized with National Justice Award



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San Diego County Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Andrew Strong has been honored with the inaugural Partners for Justice Champion Award for his leadership and innovative support of public defense.

The national nonprofit Partners for Justice (PFJ) launched the award to highlight public policy leaders who show exceptional commitment to supporting public defenders and advancing equity in the justice system.

Strong, who leads the County's Public Safety Group, was recognized for his role in bringing PFJ to San Diego and supporting innovative services for young people involved in the legal system.

"This recognition reflects the tireless work of our defenders, advocates and community partners who stand alongside individuals navigating some of the hardest moments of their lives," Strong said. "True justice is only possible when people—no matter their circumstances—have the support, dignity and representation they deserve."

Under Strong's guidance, San Diego County became the only PFJ site nationwide to focus exclusively on children and young people in the criminal legal system. Three PFJ client advocates now work directly with the County Public Defender's Office, connecting youth to housing, health care, education and other critical services.

Since 2023, PFJ advocates have supported more than 300 young people, successfully meeting their identified service needs 87% of the

time.

County Public Defender Paul Rodriguez said Strong's leadership was key in making the partnership a reality. "Andrew had the vision to connect us with PFJ, encouraged our collaboration and helped us find the resources to make this partnership work," Rodriguez said.

PFJ Co-Founder and Executive Director Emily Galvin Almanza praised Strong's role as well. "When public defenders have the support of their local leaders, they can be more than just constitutionally-mandated government actors—they can be guardians of public safety, public health, economic mobility and a person's future prospects," she said.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 25, 2025

COUNTY

County Supervisors Select Finalists for Treasurer-Tax Collector

The County Board of Supervisors selected four finalists to fill the role of Treasurer-Tax Collector during a public hearing on Tuesday.

The finalists were selected from a pool of 11 qualified applicants who applied for the position after former Treasurer-Tax Collector Dan McAllister retired on Aug. 2.

Applicants spoke before the Board and answered questions. Afterward, the Supervisors voted to select the following finalists:

During the hearing, the Board also voted to hold a community forum on Oct. 30 to give the public a chance to meet the finalists and ask them questions.

The Supervisors will see a summary of public feedback when the finalists return to the Nov. 4 Board meeting for

the second public hearing.

Each finalist will have three minutes to make an oral presentation, and Supervisors will again have the chance to ask questions.

Afterward, the Supervisors will use written ballots to vote for one of the finalists to fill the unexpired term. All votes will be read aloud, and a finalist must receive at least three votes from Board members to be appointed.

The new Treasurer-Tax Collector will serve until the current term ends on Jan. 4, 2027. An election will determine a successor for the following four-year term.

The Treasurer-Tax Collector's office collects more than \$9.1 billion in property taxes every year. The office also collects the transient occupancy tax and the cannabis business tax from businesses in the County's unincorporated area.

The treasury side of 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.

County of San Diego news release · Oct 1, 2025

COUNTY

Voter Information Pamphlets Go Out to Registered Voters for November Special Election

Voter information pamphlets are on their way to the County's over 2 million registered voters for the Nov. 4 special election.

The pamphlets contain information on voting options, election deadlines and more. They also include a sample ballot of what your official one will look like. Additionally, voters can find a list of official ballot drop boxes and vote centers inside their voter information pamphlet or online at sdvote.com.

Voters may also look up their pamphlets online with the View Voter

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

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Voter Information Pamphlets Go Out to Registered Voters for November Special Election

Information Pamphlet (Sample Ballot) tool at sdvote.com.

If you signed up to get your voter information pamphlet electronically, you should have received an email giving you the same information and a link to your pamphlet.

Voters who want to be among the first to see their pamphlet every election can sign up to receive all future pamphlets electronically. Voters who take this option will no longer receive a paper copy in the mail but will get an email when the pamphlet becomes available online.

Every active registered voter will receive a ballot in the mail and will have three options for returning their ballot: by mail, to one of the Registrar’s official ballot drop boxes or at any vote center. Voters can expect to receive their ballot the week of Oct. 6, giving them nearly a month to mark their ballot and return it by the final day of voting on Nov. 4.

Voters throughout the state will decide whether to adopt Proposition 50, an amendment to the State Constitution related to redistricting. You can learn more about the proposition in the California Voter Information Guide .

Voters who reside in the City of Poway’s Council District 2 will have an additional question on their ballot. Poway District 2 voters will decide whether to remove their elected representative on the city council from office. Only voters living in Poway’s Council District 2 are eligible to vote on this contest. If you’re not sure whether you live in the district, you can look it up at sdvote.com .

Early voting begins Monday, Oct. 6, at the Registrar of Voters office in Kearny Mesa , located at 5600 Overland Ave., San Diego. The Registrar’s office will be open 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 drop it off at any of the Registrar’s official ballot drop boxes starting Tuesday, Oct. 7, through Election Day, Nov. 4. Visit sdvote.com for a list of locations and hours of operation.

If you want to vote in person, take advantage of early voting. Starting Saturday, Oct.

25, select vote centers located around the county will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Starting Saturday, Nov. 1, all vote centers will be open daily from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. On the final day of voting, Nov. 4, all vote centers, official ballot drop boxes and the Registrar’s office will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

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

County of San Diego news release · Sep 26, 2025

COUNTY

Board Approves Next Steps in Tijuana River Valley Soil Contamination Study

The County Board of Supervisors today voted to ask the State Water Resources Control Board to fund a \$1.4 million study to test the ground and water within the Tijuana River Valley for contamination.

The two-year study, called a Sediment Quality Object Triad Analysis, is a standard scientific method for testing soil and sediment chemistry, toxicity and ecological impacts.

“This study is an important step in identifying hard evidence required by the Environmental Protection Agency to act and move toward a Superfund designation,” said Board Chair Terra Lawson Reemer. “This work is all in an effort toward ensuring that residents are no longer left to live, work, and raise families in the shadow of one of America’s most contaminated waterways.”

As part of the study, 11 sites from Los Peñasquitos Lagoon to Famosa Slough will be tested to get a broader understanding of sediment along coastal waterways.

Along with advocating for funding, the Board directed that a letter be sent to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator requesting active coordination in identifying toxic chemicals and thresholds relevant to a federal Superfund designation.

In a separate action, the Board accepted an update from County staff on other ongoing efforts to address the Tijuana River Valley Crisis.

Those actions included expanded messaging and outreach about the Air Pollution Control District’s Air Improvement Relief Program which has distributed more than 6,800 special air purifiers to households impacted by gases, such as hydrogen sulfide.

County staff also are looking into the options for an

epidemiological health study on the long-term impacts of chronic hydrogen sulfide and other exposures along with a feasibility study to address elevated hydrogen sulfide and other gas concentrations surrounding the river crossing at Saturn Boulevard.

In addition, the County Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs is coordinating efforts to do a study on the economic impacts of the Tijuana River Valley sewage crisis on small businesses, property values and tourism.

The County continues to collaborate with regional leaders, local, regional and federal agencies, healthcare providers, researchers, schools, community members and environmental justice coalitions on efforts surrounding the Tijuana River Valley sewage crisis in order to meet community needs.

These efforts are taking place in parallel with a public health assessment being conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)/Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). The two-year study is evaluating the Tijuana River Valley for hazardous substances, health outcomes, and community concerns.

Residents can use an interactive dashboard on the County’s Tijuana River Valley Sewage Crisis website to check beach water quality, hydrogen sulfide levels, air quality complaints and wastewater flows all in one place.

Mental health resources are available for anyone feeling emotionally affected by the Tijuana River Valley sewage crisis through the San Diego Access Crisis Line by calling 1-888-724-7240 or 988.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 30, 2025

COUNTY

County Programs and Partnerships Building a Stronger Environment for Older Adults

The County’s Board of Supervisors received an update on the Aging Roadmap today, a comprehensive plan to make sure our region has the programs and resources needed to support the growing number of older adults.

By 2029, the region’s older adult population is expected to grow to 820,000, making up a quarter of the County’s population of 3.3 million residents.

Originally released in 2019, the Aging Roadmap is updated annually. It was created using input from community members, surveys and those

who work with or serve the aging population.

“Our goal with the Aging Roadmap is to create supportive and inclusive communities where people of all ages and abilities have the equitable opportunity to thrive,” said Jennifer Bransford-Koons, County Aging & Independence Services (AIS) Director. “It is thanks to the feedback we get from the community that we’re able to align our programs and resources to make sure we’re reaching people with the services they need and that the contributions of older adults are harnessed.”

The 2025 Aging Roadmap Annual Update covers program highlights for fiscal year 2024 to 2025, including:

More than 3,500 residents participated in health promotion programs including exercise classes like Tai Chi and Feeling Fit Club in fiscal year 2024-2025. These fitness programs have been able to expand to rural communities thanks to live streaming and collaborations with County partners.

The Tech2Connect program served 941 In-Home Supportive Services participants in fiscal year 2024-2025. The program helped participants find connection with others and provided mental health resources. It offered internet-connected tablets to participants along with training. Since it started in 2023, Tech2Connect has served 1,775 people.

Aging & independence Services partnered to create nine intergenerational gardens throughout the County and hosted 65 intergenerational gardening and nutrition activities for 590 participants.

The San Diego County No-Cost Transportation Program for Older Adults provided more than 28,400 one-way trips to older adults last fiscal year. Access to safe, affordable and reliable transportation is crucial for older adults to maintain independence, be able to get to the services they need and stay socially connected. Additionally, 65 older adults received training on how to navigate public transportation independently.

The County’s Shallow Rent Subsidy Program provided 380 eligible older adults with a \$500 monthly rental subsidy in fiscal year 2024-2025.

Members of the Age Well Dementia & Brain Health Team provided Dementia Friends sessions for more than 280 people. The sessions covered dementia and its impact and how to create environments that are welcoming to those living with dementia.

Courts · Transit · Public safety

The Caregiver Support Program helps people who care for a family member or loved one. It provided resources to 2,943 family caregivers that included 14,683 hours of respite care.

To promote the safety of older adults and people with disabilities, Adult Protective Services (APS) did more than 22,880 investigations while the Elder Justice Task Force focused on reducing scams and fraud.

The San Diego Fall Prevention Task Force provided educational opportunities to more than 200 community members on how to prevent falls.

People with questions or those who want to learn more about the programs and services available for older adults can call the AIS Call Center at 1-800-339-4661 or visit the AIS website.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 30, 2025

COUNTY

Together in Hope: Suicide Prevention Resources in San Diego County

As Suicide Prevention Month finishes up, it’s timely to provide a reminder that resources, tools and training are available year-round to help prevent suicide deaths.

Based on the latest data, the San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council reported 363 suicide deaths in 2023 , a 1 percent increase from the 359 deaths the previous year, and a 6 percent increase since 2021.

“Asking someone how they’re really doing and being ready to truly listen can save a life,” said Nadia Privara, acting director of County Behavioral Health Services. “No one should have to face mental health challenges alone. Help exists. Healing is possible. And all it can take is for one person to start a conversation.”

The County’s Behavioral Health Services Suicide Prevention Awareness Month toolkit Together in Hope offers a variety of resources for seeking help, talking about suicide prevention, and more.

Know the signs, be prepared: No-cost Suicide Prevention Trainings are offered year-round by the San Diego County Suicide Prevention Council. Visit www.SPCSanDiego.org or call 858-609-7960 to learn more.

Visit It’s Up to Us to find help for talking openly about mental health, how to recognize the signs of mental health struggles, find local resources, and get support.

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY (CONTINUED)

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Together in Hope: Suicide Prevention Resources in San Diego County

Own Your Mindset offers tools for youth and young adults to help explore feelings, strengthen mental health, and #OwnYourMindset. Check out Talk It Out SD to find suicide

prevention support.

Try the 30-Day Mental Wellness Practice . This tool-kit offers daily activities to take care of your mental health by guiding you through physical practices for your body, cognitive practices for your mind and emotional and social practices for your mood and relationships. Similarly, created by youth, for youth, the Youth Mental

Wellness Practice offers resources like self-care and stress-reducing checklists , journaling prompts, and more .

The County also offers a variety of services and tailored programs to meet people where they are and prevent and address suicide on the Suicide Prevention Resources webpage . For example, there are programs for LGBTQ+

youth, young adults, and members of the military and veterans.

Signs that someone may be at risk of suicide include: feeling hopeless or without purpose, talking about being a burden, increased alcohol or drug use, withdrawing socially and extreme mood swings.

Suicide is preventable. If

you or someone you know needs help, call 9-8-8 to speak to a trained crisis specialist. Calling 9-8-8 will connect you to the San Diego Access & Crisis Line, available seven days a week/24-hours a day. Support is free, confidential, and available in over 200 languages within seconds.

County of San Diego news release · Sep 29, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



Illustration

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight: Mastro’s Ocean Club

Mastro’s Ocean Club is elevating the fine dining scene in San Diego, bringing over 20 years of culinary excellence to the city’s iconic waterfront. With a reputation built on sophistication, consistency, and attention to detail, Mastro’s is known nationwide for its world-class service, chef-driven cuisine, and vibrant live entertainment. Now, San Diego guests can experience the brand’s signature blend of elegance and energy in a stunning coastal setting.

The menu showcases the finest USDA Prime steaks, including the renowned 28-day wet-aged cuts, alongside an impressive array of fresh seafood, a decadent raw bar, creative sushi selections, and shareable sides. The signature two-foot-tall seafood tower and award-winning warm butter cake are just a few of the unforgettable highlights that have made Mastro’s a dining destination across the country.

What truly sets Mastro’s apart is its unwavering commitment to exceptional hospitality. Every guest is treated to a personalized experience, from expertly crafted cocktails and a Wine Spectator-honored wine list to live nightly music that adds to the dynamic, high-end atmosphere. Whether you’re celebrating a milestone, hosting a

private event, or simply indulging in an extraordinary evening out, Mastro’s delivers with elegance and flair. Now open in San Diego’s premier waterfront district, Mastro’s Ocean Club invites locals and visitors alike to discover what makes it one of the nation’s most celebrated steakhouses —where unforgettable moments are crafted nightly, and every detail is designed to impress.

Website: https://www.mastrosrestaurants.com/location/san-diego/

Address: 901 Bayfront Court, Suite 105, San Diego, CA 92101

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Oct 1, 2025

BUSINESS

TJRV Update

Last month, the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) announced the completion of the 10 million gallon per day (mgd) expansion of the South Bay International Wastewater Treatment Plant in just 100 days. The agency is on track, expanding the treatment plant’s capacity from 25 mgd to 35 mgd to support reduce wastewater flowing into the Tijuana River. Next steps include further expanding the plant’s capacity to 50 mgd and secure funding for infrastructure projects on both sides of the border as well as operation and maintenance.

Last week, the County Board of Supervisors presented a board letter to direct county staff to conduct an epidemiological public health impact study and an

economic impact study on transboundary pollution. International and Policy Advisor Myriam Mendoza provided public comment to the Board urging strong support for an impact study that quantifies the economic losses and opportunity cost to our regional business community. The Chamber will continue to lead efforts to secure additional funding and advance infrastructure projects and initiatives on both sides of the border that mitigate pollution, including our upcoming binational delegation trip to Mexico City where it remains a top priority.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Sep 23, 2025

AROUND CALIFORNIA

Statewide news

CALIFORNIA

Federal Shutdown Highlights California’s Use of Medicaid Funds for Illegal Immigrants

State’s expansion of Medi-Cal to cover hundreds of thousands of undocumented residents has drawn billions in federal subsidies.

A partial federal government shutdown has drawn fresh attention to how California and seven other states use budget maneuvers to extend Medicaid-style coverage to illegal immigrants, shifting costs onto national taxpayers.

According to a report by the Congressional Budget

Committee, California is one of eight states that has broadened its Medicaid program to provide taxpayer-funded health care to illegal aliens. Federal law bars most federal Medicaid dollars from going to this population except for emergency services.

The committee’s analysis states that California finances its expansion through a budget gimmick designed to increase federal funding, ultimately placing American taxpayers on the hook for the coverage.

In January the state became the first to open its Medicaid program, known as Medi-Cal, to all illegal immigrants

living within its borders. That decision added as many as 700,000 people to the rolls even as the state faced a record \$68 billion budget deficit.

Recent coverage by this news outlet has detailed the \$23 billion cost of Medi-Cal over two years, forcing Gov. Gavin Newsom to seek both an emergency loan and a bailout, according to Rep. Kevin Kiley.

Federal subsidies to California for this coverage have reached an estimated \$4 billion.

During the budget standoff, Rep. Maxine Waters responded to questions about

providing such coverage by saying, "we want healthcare for everybody."

Rep. Rho Khanna has described the expense of Medicaid for illegal immigrants as “just a small part” of overall costs. Yet the scale of the state’s expansion has raised questions about the accuracy of that characterization.

State Sen. Sasha Renée Pérez claimed illegal immigrants are not eligible for Medicaid. That assertion drew sharp criticism.

The shutdown fight centers on disputes over federal Medicaid funding. Democrats have framed the impasse as

an effort to “save healthcare,” but the underlying issue includes continued federal subsidies for coverage of illegal immigrants.

The situation underscores the tension between state policy choices in California and their impact on the broader federal budget.

California’s experience shows how one state’s decision to expand coverage can ripple across the national ledger, drawing federal dollars while leaving local budgets strained.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Oct 1, 2025

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Award for equity and public defenders

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

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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MORE NEWS

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY Get Involved for National Preparedness Month Once you have prepared a disaster plan for yourself and family and assembled emergency supplies you can use if evacuated, consider helping your neighbors and friends by encouraging them to make their own disaster plans and emergency supplies kit. For people interested in going beyond helping family and neighbors, there are many local opportunities to explore. Programs like the	Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) train volunteers in basic response skills so they can help others during emergencies. Others may prefer to help with important work behind the scenes like animal rescue or join organizations such as the American Red Cross or Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster to assist with sheltering, feeding and other community needs that develop after a disaster. “For National Preparedness Month, the County Office of Emergency Services wants to acknowledge all of the	residents who volunteer their time and talents in support of community preparedness and response efforts,” said Julie Jeakle, emergency services director. “Emergency response is a whole community effort, and we thank all those who are dedicated to keeping our communities safe.” Learn about organizations that engage volunteers: Reach out to organizations you would like to volunteer with in advance. Many organizations can only use trained volunteers during	emergencies, so getting involved before disaster strikes is key. The Office of Emergency Services lists several county, state and national organizations on the AlertSanDiego Get Involved page including a few highlighted below. The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program educates volunteers about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organization, and disaster	medical operations. County residents interested in joining CERT should contact the CERT Program Manager in their community. San Diego County Animal Services has disaster response volunteers who must be trained in advance to help with transporting or caring for animals during a disaster. To learn more, fill out the volunteer application and check the box for disaster response and the kinds of animals you would like to help. County of San Diego news release · Sep 26, 2025
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SAN DIEGO NEWSLINE

The news, every day.

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