

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

Leadership Transitions Announced as County Continues Transformation



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

Three high profile County departments will have new leaders, and the hiring process is underway for several other leadership positions as the County’s continuing transformation begins the new year, bringing new opportunities to improve efficiency, maximize resources and boost innovation in service of our diverse community.

Nadia Privara Brahms had been appointed as the Behavioral Health Services Director, effective Jan. 9, after serving as the Acting Director for the past several months. She and her team are committed to providing compassionate care to vulnerable residents with serious mental health and substance use conditions and guiding the department into the future. Privara Brahms started her career with the County in 2005 and joined Behavioral Health Services in 2014, where she led the development of the Optimal Care Pathways models to identify future capacity needs for treatment services locally. She also led the implementation of behavioral health payment reform under Medi-Cal Transformation, guided the development of the new ELEVATE Behavioral Health Workforce Fund to recruit and retain workforce within County-funded behavioral health programs, and pursued more than \$430 million in grant funding, with over \$175 million of grant funds awarded to BHS over the last four years.

Eric Shiotsugu has been appointed as the Chief Information Officer of the County Technology

Office after serving in an acting role since August. His appointment is effective immediately. Shiotsugu has worked for the County for over 20 years and has experience spanning both government and private sector roles. Before joining the County Technology Office, he led large technology projects in the Auditor & Controller Department, experience that will be invaluable with upcoming projects including next steps in the IT outsourcing contract. As Acting Chief Information Officer, Shiotsugu led the creation of the County’s AI best practices.

Shawn Brom has been selected as the new Registrar of Voters following a broad national search. Brom currently serves as Assistant Registrar and brings more than 25 years of experience with the San Diego County Registrar of Voters. He has extensive expertise in managing complex systems and ensuring compliance with state and federal elections. He began his County career in 2000 as a precinct planning technician. He later served as elections processing supervisor, election manager and Chief of Departmental Operations before assuming the role of Assistant Registrar. Brom will assume the role on Jan. 9. Registrar of Voters Cynthia Paes plans to retire in February after 23 years of service with the County of San Diego. The office ensures the County administers fair, transparent and accurate elections with the highest level of integrity.

The hiring process is underway

for additional key leadership roles in Human Resources, Health and Human Services Agency and County Counsel, with positions expected to be filled in early 2026.

A new Human Resources Director is being hired after current Director Susan Brazeau announced she will retire in March. She has been with the County for over 23 years. Human Resources provides and retains a skilled, adaptable, and diverse workforce to bring the County’s mission and culture to life and make a meaningful difference for our communities. The County appreciates Brazeau and Paes for serving the community for more than 20 years each, and we wish them the best in their next chapter.

In the Health and Human Services Agency, the County will be filling the role of Deputy Chief Administrative Officer (DCAO), a position that leads a group of departments and programs providing a broad range of health and social services to make people’s lives healthier, safer and self-sufficient. In the office of County Counsel, the Board of Supervisors is conducting the hiring process to select the department head who leads the County’s civil law needs. The new County Counsel will have the opportunity to fill key vacancies once on board.

Many of the new hires will overlap with the incumbents to provide for a smooth transition.

The County is grateful for the leadership and dedication of these

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Leadership Transitions Announced as County Continues Transformation

individuals in supporting the changes that will help the County realize its vision of a just, sustainable,

and resilient future for all while preparing for the challenges and opportunities ahead. These transitions bring new opportunities to position the region for the future in collaboration with our

partners and the community. The County provides a broad range of programs and services to keep people and their families safe and healthy. As a government agency, it is responsible for the day-to-day

things a city government would typically do for residents in the unincorporated area, including law enforcement, roads, building permits, animal shelters, parks and libraries. It also provides

many services that support the entire region, things like emergency preparedness, elections, health programs and social service assistance.

County of San Diego news release · Dec 29, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

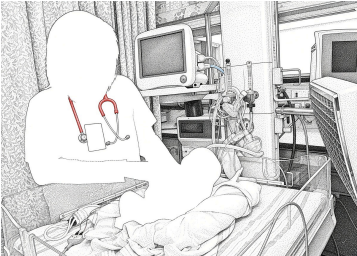


Illustration from a photo by National Institute of Standards and Technology · Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight – NextMed

Driving Innovation: NextMed and Sharp HealthCare Transform Specialty Care

As San Diego solidifies its reputation for healthcare excellence, the intersection between independent practices and major health systems has never been more critical. At the forefront of this evolution is NextMed , a specialized medical ecosystem designed to empower private practices and foster collaboration with regional leaders such as Sharp HealthCare.

NextMed marks a new era of collaborative healthcare, bringing together several of the region’s leading medical providers under one roof. Located at 5643 Copley Drive in San Diego, the campus

serves as a comprehensive destination for patients, featuring a premier lineup that includes United Medical Doctors (Urgent Care and Multi-Specialty Clinic), Rejuvenate Plastic Surgery, 4M Dental Implants, Ortho 1 (Medical Group and Physical Therapy), and the San Diego Sleep Study Center.

This unique environment allows independent specialists to thrive within a state-of-the-art infrastructure designed for innovation. Central to this ecosystem is the newly opened Sharp San Diego Surgery Center (SSDSC). Occupying 18,643 square feet within the NextMed facility, this world-class outpatient center features five “first-in-class” operating rooms dedicated to Orthopedic Surgery, Total Joint Replacement, and ENT.

“Our goal at NextMed has always been to create a space where the highest caliber of independent medicine can flourish,” says Scott Leggett, CEO of NextMed. “By aligning our innovative environment with the clinical excellence of Sharp HealthCare, we are

providing San Diegans with a seamless experience that combines the scale of a major health system with the personalized care of private specialists.”

The integration of the SSDSC into the NextMed campus reflects a commitment to making high- quality specialty care more accessible and convenient. We invite the San Diego community to experience this new standard of care, where advanced technology meets a patient-centered environment.

Whether you are seeking specialized surgery or routine wellness care, our doors are open to provide you with the region’s best medical expertise in one modern location. Visit NextMedCenter.com for more information or contact Suzanne Forman, NextMed Director of Facilities at (760) 405-5030.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Dec 19, 2025

BUSINESS

Voices in Leadership Forum

Last month, the Chamber

proudly hosted a first-of-its-kind convening spotlighting women leaders across the public and private sectors in the CaliBaja region. Voices in Leadership: Women Driving Business, Advocacy, and Public Service in CaliBaja brought together influential women whose leadership is shaping policy, strengthening our economy, and advancing our binational community.

The event featured two dynamic panels. The first showcased women elected officials leading with purpose and impact, including Ambassador Alicia Kerber Palma, Consul General of Mexico in San Diego; Chula Vista Deputy Mayor Carolina Chávez; and Lemon Grove Mayor Alysson Snow. Panelists candidly discussed the challenges women face in public service, the barriers they have overcome, and their shared commitment to driving positive change and prosperity in our region.

The second panel highlighted leadership in the private sector, featuring Chamber Board Member Lisa Kay, J’Keren Sears of Alaska

Airlines, and small business owner Rosalba Bastillos. Each speaker shared their professional journeys, aspirations, and the opportunities their careers have created, while also addressing the real challenges of leadership and growth as women in business.

Originally planned for the Chamber boardroom, overwhelming interest and registration prompted the event’s relocation to the Sharp Prebys Innovation and Education Center, a testament to the strong demand for spaces that elevate women’s voices and leadership.

Due to its tremendous success, the Chamber is excited to announce plans to host additional Voices in Leadership sessions in 2026, in partnership with LEAD San Diego. Stay tuned as we continue to create platforms that inspire, connect, and empower the next generation of leaders.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Dec 18, 2025

AROUND CALIFORNIA

Statewide news

CALIFORNIA

HUD Report Flags \$5.8 Billion in Improper Rental Aid Payments Nationwide, With California Among Top Offenders

Federal auditors identified payments to deceased tenants, over-income households and potentially ineligible non-citizens as HUD Secretary Scott Turner announces pauses in funding, criminal referrals and AI fraud detection.

A new U.S. Housing and Urban Development Agency Financial Report has documented \$5.8 billion in questionable rental assistance payments during fiscal year 2024, representing more than 11 percent of the nearly \$50 billion disbursed across the country.

The 183-page report detailed improper payments made to roughly 30,000 deceased tenants, thousands of potentially ineligible

non-citizens and more than 200,000 recipients who exceeded income eligibility limits, according to the HUD findings.

California, New York and Washington, D.C., recorded the largest concentrations of these improper payments, the report showed.

HUD Secretary Scott Turner described the scale of the problem as “massive abuse of taxpayer dollars.”

Turner said in a statement that “a massive abuse of taxpayer dollars not only occurred under President [Joe] Biden’s watch, but was effectively incentivized by his administration’s failure to implement strong financial controls resulting in billions worth of potential improper payments.”

The secretary added that HUD “will continue investigating the shocking results and will take appropriate action to hold bad actors accountable.” He said the department is also advancing

efforts made under President Trump’s first administration “to strengthen program integrity and ensure taxpayer-funded assistance serves the vulnerable communities it was intended for.”

Turner announced that the department is pausing certain funds, issuing criminal referrals and deploying artificial intelligence fraud detection tools through the HUD Unified Grants System.

The improper-payment findings come as California faces renewed scrutiny over its homelessness spending. According to a March 5, 2025, report from the California Legislative Analyst’s Office, the state has spent \$37 billion on homelessness programs since 2019.

On Nov. 25, 2025, Gov. Gavin Newsom joined a multistate lawsuit challenging HUD’s revisions to the 2025 Continuum of Care funding rules. The suit objects to new caps on permanent supportive housing spending,

requirements tied to self-sufficiency and accountability, and a shift away from the strict “Housing First” model.

As a result of the policy changes, California stands to lose between \$250 million and \$300 million of its \$683 million Continuum of Care allocation.

HUD’s notice cites President Trump’s Executive Order “Ending Crime and Disorder on America’s Streets” and redirects the majority of funding toward transitional housing and supportive services.

California received \$8.3 billion in HUD aid in 2023 to support 560,000 households. A separate state auditor’s review found that eight California agencies have been rated “High Risk” for fraud, waste and abuse for multiple consecutive years, with the number of such agencies doubling under Newsom.

Federal prosecutors have already pursued similar fraud cases elsewhere. In February

2024, authorities in the Southern District of New York charged 70 current and former employees of the New York City Housing Authority in what U.S. Attorney Damian Williams called “the largest single-day bribery takedown in the history of the Justice Department.”

That probe involved roughly \$2 million in corrupt payments and \$13 million in no-bid contracts. A March 2025 HUD Office of Inspector General audit concluded that federal funds sent to the authority were at “greater risk of fraud” because of inadequate safeguards.

According to U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli, an investigation in California has begun, is ongoing, and initial indictments have been filed.

The source material contains no support for claims that the report was released under the incoming Trump administration, that California has the single

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AROUND CALIFORNIA (CONTINUED)

Statewide news

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HUD Report Flags \$5.8 Billion in Improper Rental Aid Payments Nationwide, With California Among Top Offenders

largest HUD allocation of any state, that the current number of homeless people in the state is exactly 187,000, or that HUD officials described the purpose of the changes as ensuring dollars reach eligible households rather than subsidizing waste or fraud.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Dec 31, 2025

CALIFORNIA

Federal Judge Allows Trump Administration to Share Limited Medicaid Data with ICE

U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria rejected a challenge from California Attorney General Rob Bonta and 21 other Democratic attorneys general seeking to block use of basic enrollee information for immigration enforcement.

A federal judge has cleared the way for the Trump administration to share select personal data on Medicaid enrollees with immigration authorities, a move that could help locate undocumented immigrants receiving public benefits.

U.S. District Judge Vince Chhabria issued the ruling Monday, overruling objections from California Attorney General Rob Bonta and 21 other Democratic attorneys general. The decision takes effect Jan. 6, 2026.

The case began with a lawsuit filed in July by the

Democratic attorneys general. They aimed to prevent the Department of Health and Human Services from turning over information to Immigration and Customs Enforcement for use in deportation cases.

California expanded its Medi-Cal program to cover hundreds of thousands of people regardless of immigration status. Undocumented immigrants remain ineligible for federal Medicaid dollars, but the state uses its own funds for the coverage.

Those expansions have contributed to major financial pressure on the program. In September, Rep. Kevin Kiley (R-CA) confirmed that Medi-Cal was driven into insolvency, requiring an emergency loan and bailout after costs reached \$23 billion.

The ruling permits sharing of six categories of basic information: citizenship, immigration status, address, phone number, date of birth and Medicaid ID number. Judge Chhabria determined this sharing "is clearly

authorized by law" and that the agencies have adequately explained their decisions.

The order bars transmission of sensitive medical records or detailed health information for enforcement purposes, preserving privacy safeguards for treatment data.

A spokesperson for the Department of Homeland Security welcomed the outcome. "This is a victory for the rule of law and American taxpayers," Tricia McLaughlin said.

California officials had argued that allowing law enforcement access would violate enrollees' trust and discourage people from seeking medical care. The state has maintained sanctuary policies that limit cooperation with federal immigration authorities.

Judge Chhabria, an Obama appointee, found that policies covering information beyond the six basic categories were unclear. He declined to block the narrower data exchange on that basis.

The November notices from ICE and HHS outlined plans to incorporate Medicaid data into enforcement priorities.

The preliminary order leaves the underlying lawsuit intact, meaning further litigation is likely.

Attorney General Rob Bonta posted on Dec. 18 that the state would "continue to protect our migrant communities."

Critics counter that the program strains resources intended for citizens and legal residents. The source reports that after bankrupting Medi-Cal, Gov. Newsom announced plans to cut benefits to any poor or disabled elderly Californian who has \$2,000 in assets.

The ruling provides federal agencies a tool to ensure public benefits reach those legally eligible.

The full case will continue in Chhabria's court.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Dec 30, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



New leaders, same revolving door?

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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 sandiegonewslne.com.	
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SAN DIEGO NEWSLINE

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