

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

Longtime County Employee Named Chief Deputy of Tax Collection



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The County has a new chief deputy of tax collection. Longtime County employee Detra Williams was appointed to the position effective Jan. 6. Treasurer-Tax Collector Larry Cohen announced the appointment on Jan. 6.

Williams has worked for the County of San Diego for nearly 35 years. She spent more than 20 years in the Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office and held leadership roles in the District Attorney's Office and other County departments.

Williams replaces longtime Chief Deputy David Baker, who retired after decades of service to the County.

"Detra is a great fit for this important role. Throughout her tenure, she has played a key role in advancing modernization and innovation within the Tax Collection division, helping improve transparency, access, and customer service for taxpayers countywide," said Cohen. "She is widely respected for her collaborative, workforce-centered leadership style, and her commitment to supporting employees while delivering results for the public."

"Promoting from within strengthens trust, preserves institutional knowledge, and recognizes the talent that already exists within our organization," said Cohen. "Ms. Williams leadership reflects the values of professionalism, service, and respect that define this office."

Annually, the San Diego County Treasurer-Tax Collector's Office

collects more than \$9.1 billion in property taxes and more than \$150 million in unsecured personal property taxes, making it one of the largest property tax jurisdictions in California.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 7, 2026



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COUNTY

County Library Releases Top Ten Checkout Lists for 2025

Finding books on a library's top ten checkout list is no surprise, but a new category has made its way onto the County Library's list.

Digital magazines were so popular last year, they were added to the mix. Checkouts jumped 43% to 808,000. Last year, the number was 563,000.

All library checkouts increased by 3.3% for a total of 11.4 million. And now, for the first time, digital items won out over physical checkouts. Last year, digital checkouts came in 6.1 million over physical checkouts of 5.2 million.

What else is new? The library's new electric outreach vans. They travel throughout the region promoting library services and offering free library cards.

You can also get or renew library cards at any one of the library's 33 branches or apply for an e-Card online .

Adult Books (e-book and physical book checkouts combined. Note: Emily Henry has two titles in the top 10.)

The Wedding People : A Novel by Alison Espach

The God of the Woods : A Novel by Liz Moore

Remarkably Bright Creatures : A Novel by Shelby Van Pelt

All the Colors of the Dark by Chris Whitaker

The Wedding People : A Novel (unabridged)

The God of the Woods : A Novel (unabridged)

Pretty Girls : (unabridged) Karin Slaughter

The Housemaid : (unabridged) Freida McFadden

All the Colors of the Dark : (unabridged)

Teen Fiction (Note: Three series and one outlier.)

Sunrise on the Reaping by Suzanne Collins

A Court of Thorns and Roses by Sarah J Maas

The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes by Suzanne Collins

Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince by JK Rowling

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows by JK Rowling

Top 10 Children's Books (Note: Four authors hold down the top 10.)

Diary of a Wimpy Kid. [19], Hot Mess by Jeff Kinney

Dog Man. The Scarlet Shedder by Dav Pilkey

Diary of a Wimpy Kid. [18], No Brainer by Jeff Kinney

Cat Kid Comic Club. Influencers by Dav Pilkey

Big Nate. Remain calm! By Lincoln Peirce

Big Nate. This Means War! By Lincoln Peirce

Diary of a Wimpy Kid. [17], Diper överlöde by Jeff Kinney

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

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County Library Releases Top Ten Checkout Lists for 2025

County of San Diego news release · Jan 7, 2026

COUNTY

County Public Health Lab Starts Testing Local Wastewater for Diseases

For the first time, the County’s public health lab today began routine in-house wastewater testing, with the results available on an online public dashboard.

Routine wastewater testing gives public health officials a snapshot of what diseases are circulating locally and the ability to track trends often before they are detected

through the medical community’s robust testing. Along with the public visibility of the dashboard, trends are available to the medical community.

This type of testing began regionally during the Covid-19 pandemic with SEARCH (San Diego Epidemiology and Research for COVID Health), which was a County supported partnership with Scripps Research and the University of California San Diego which operated the necessary equipment. Federal funding for SEARCH ended in December 2025.

Following the May 2025 opening of the County’s new state-of-the-art Public Health Lab , specialists began the training and equipment certification necessary for

wastewater testing.

“Bringing wastewater testing in house with our new lab is just one example of the County’s expanded ability to protect the public’s health and act quickly to confront emerging disease outbreaks,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, M.D., M.P.H., County public health officer.

Wastewater testing works by collecting samples from regional sewage treatment plants. When people are sick with certain infections like flu or Covid, the viruses or bacteria are shed when they use the bathroom, shower, or wash their hands or clothes.

Locally, sewage water samples are collected for testing from the Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant, South Bay Water Reclamation

Plant and the Encina Wastewater Authority.

The County’s wastewater testing will routinely look for Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2), Influenza A and B, and respiratory syncytial virus or RSV. Molecular scientists can also use sequencing to figure out what specific strains of Covid are circulating in San Diego County. In the future, the County will expand testing to prioritized diseases.

Wastewater data is crucial for public health departments. It provides non-invasive and anonymous information about the health of our community, including for those who are sick but may not yet have any symptoms. Wastewater data can be used by public health departments to act quickly before a disease

Courts · Transit · Public safety

spreads in a community and track for the recurrence of disease.

Collecting population health data this way gives us a snapshot of what diseases are affecting people locally that might be missed by clinical testing.

Paired with surveillance data, public health officials can make decisions about the deployment of public health tools, health messaging and recommendations for the public, and alerting local health partners.

People can view wastewater data on a new dashboard available online on the County’s public health website.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 7, 2026

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

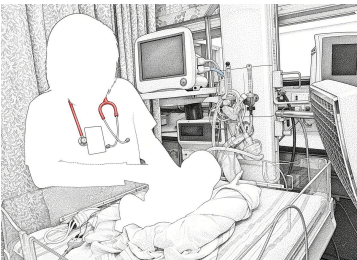


Illustration from a photo by National Institute of Standards and Technology · Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

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

DOJ Secures Halt to California Law Banning Masks for Federal Immigration Agents

Federal authorities have paused enforcement of a new state statute that sought to bar ICE officers from concealing their identities during operations, citing violations of constitutional federal supremacy.

Federal prosecutors have obtained an agreement from

California to suspend a new law that would have barred federal immigration officers from wearing face coverings while on duty.

The measure, known as the No Secret Police Act or Senate Bill 627, was signed by Gov. Gavin Newsom in September and was set to take effect Jan. 1. It would have made it a misdemeanor for law enforcement personnel, including agents from ICE, to wear masks or disguises that hide their identities during official actions.

The U.S. Department of Justice filed suit in November, arguing the statute interferes with federal operations and violates the Supremacy Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli announced the development on X, stating the state had agreed to put the law on hold.

“This isn’t true,” Essayli wrote in response to a post by the bill’s author. “California has no authority to regulate federal agents. This state law

violates the federal Supremacy Clause. We have asked a federal judge to strike it down, and a hearing is scheduled for January 12. In the meantime, California has agreed to put the law on hold and not enforce its unconstitutional mask ban.”

The joint stipulation was approved by U.S. District Judge Christina A. Snyder on Dec. 9. It delays California’s response to the federal complaint until after a ruling on a preliminary injunction. The parties must then propose a

schedule for further proceedings within 21 days of that decision.

The pause protects federal agents from state penalties while the court considers whether to permanently block the law. A hearing is set for Jan. 12.

Supporters of the legislation framed it as a defense against what they called “secret police” tactics. State Sen. Scott Wiener, the bill’s sponsor, posted a video on Jan. 1 declaring the measure in

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AROUND CALIFORNIA (CONTINUED)

Statewide news

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DOJ Secures Halt to California Law Banning Masks for Federal Immigration Agents

Wiener said in the video, “My anti-masking law is now officially in effect. In California, law enforcement can no longer hide behind face coverings. I’ve stood up to Trump and his reign of terror as your State Senator, and I will continue to do so as your future Congressman.”

Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas referred to ICE agents as “Donald Trump’s secret police” and said they “are terrorizing hardworking Californians — but Democrats are fighting back to keep our communities safe from Trump’s heartless and illegal ICE raids. Secret police are un-American. These new laws make it clear: Show some ID, masks off. We will fight as long as it takes to protect California.”

Newsom’s office, when the bills were signed, said the package would make

California the first state to prohibit federal officers from hiding their identities and reduce the chance that immigration enforcement would target children in classrooms or patients in hospitals.

Federal officials counter that agents wear masks to protect against doxxing, harassment and violence from activists. The DOJ reports over a thousand percent increase in violence against federal law enforcement officers.

The complaint argues that

forcing agents to reveal their faces exposes them to harm from criminal networks, including cartels and human traffickers, and undermines national immigration enforcement efforts.

California has no power to impose such restrictions on federal personnel, the suit contends, pointing to long-established precedent like *McCulloch v. Maryland* that states cannot impede federal operations.

The development highlights ongoing tension

between the state’s sanctuary policies and the Trump administration’s renewed emphasis on border security and deportation of criminal illegal aliens.

The case, *United States v. State of California*, was filed in the Central District of California. A ruling in favor of the DOJ could invalidate the statute and affirm federal authority over immigration matters.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Jan 2, 2026

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



Testing the wastewater we pay for.

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

California Policy Center Warns SEIU’s ‘One-Time’ Billionaire Tax Could Become a Permanent Levy

The union’s plan to offset federal Medicaid cuts with a retroactive wealth tax risks repeated ballot measures and fails to address underlying program inefficiencies, argues Marc Joffe.

The Service Employees International Union is advancing a novel retroactive wealth tax on California

billionaires, framing it as a temporary solution to anticipated reductions in federal Medicaid funding. But according to the California Policy Center, this so-called one-time fix could easily evolve into a recurring burden on high-net-worth residents.

Marc Joffe, president of the Contra Costa Taxpayers Association and a visiting fellow at the California Policy Center, writes that the SEIU proposal would impose a tax based on wealth as of January 1, 2026, making it difficult to

avoid in the short term. He notes that while presented as a single-year levy, the measure allows billionaires to spread payments over up to five years with 7.5 percent annual interest on deferred amounts.

The Center argues that 90 percent of the projected revenue would be directed toward Medi-Cal, California’s Medicaid program, to replace funds lost under last year’s One Big Beautiful Bill Act. The remaining share would support K-12 education and nutrition programs, a move

Joffe suggests is partly aimed at securing backing from the California Teachers Association.

Proponents estimate the federal cuts will total \$100 billion over five years and claim the wealth tax would generate a comparable sum. Joffe observes that this five-year horizon aligns with the union’s apparent hope that voters will replace Republican lawmakers with Democrats by 2029, reversing the spending reductions.

However, the California Policy Center cautions that

such political outcomes are uncertain. Joffe points out that by 2029, looming insolvencies in Social Security and Medicare trust funds could dominate the federal agenda, diverting resources and attention away from expanding Medicaid.

Should federal support fall short, SEIU might pressure state leaders to allocate more from California’s general fund to Medi-Cal. Yet Joffe warns the state already confronts a structural gap between spending demands and

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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

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California Policy Center Warns SEIU’s ‘One-Time’ Billionaire Tax Could Become a Permanent Levy

revenue growth, making sustained increases difficult without new taxes.

The commentary questions whether Medi-Cal truly requires the additional funding. Joffe explains that the One Big Beautiful Bill Act did not cut the federal matching rate or eliminate eligibility for any beneficiary groups.

Instead, projected revenue losses stem from limits on provider taxes and stricter eligibility verification.

California has long used supplemental taxes on hospitals and insurers to draw extra federal matching funds, often at ratios as high as 9-to-1. The federal legislation caps these arrangements. The bill also mandates more frequent eligibility reviews and a community engagement requirement of at least 80 hours per month of work, volunteering or education.

Joffe highlights that the

state auditor has labeled Medi-Cal’s eligibility verification a “high-risk” area since 2007. He argues insufficient checks have led to payments for ineligible recipients, including those who have moved, gained employer coverage or are undocumented immigrants.

The Center contends the union’s proposal effectively demands that California preserve “sloppy eligibility checks” and expansive coverage for illegal immigrants, many of whom may have self-deported but remain on the

rolls. It also seeks to sustain a provider tax system that Joffe says overcharges federal taxpayers.

Even after the federal changes, Joffe notes the government will continue contributing roughly \$100 billion annually to Medi-Cal. “That just isn’t enough for SEIU,” he writes, “so it’s asking the state government to confiscate wealth to top it off.”

California voters should reject the measure, Joffe concludes in the commentary, to avoid locking in higher spending on a program that

needs reform rather than endless new revenue streams.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jan 7, 2026

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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