

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 Encourages Residents to Join County Employees in Annual Point-in-Time Count

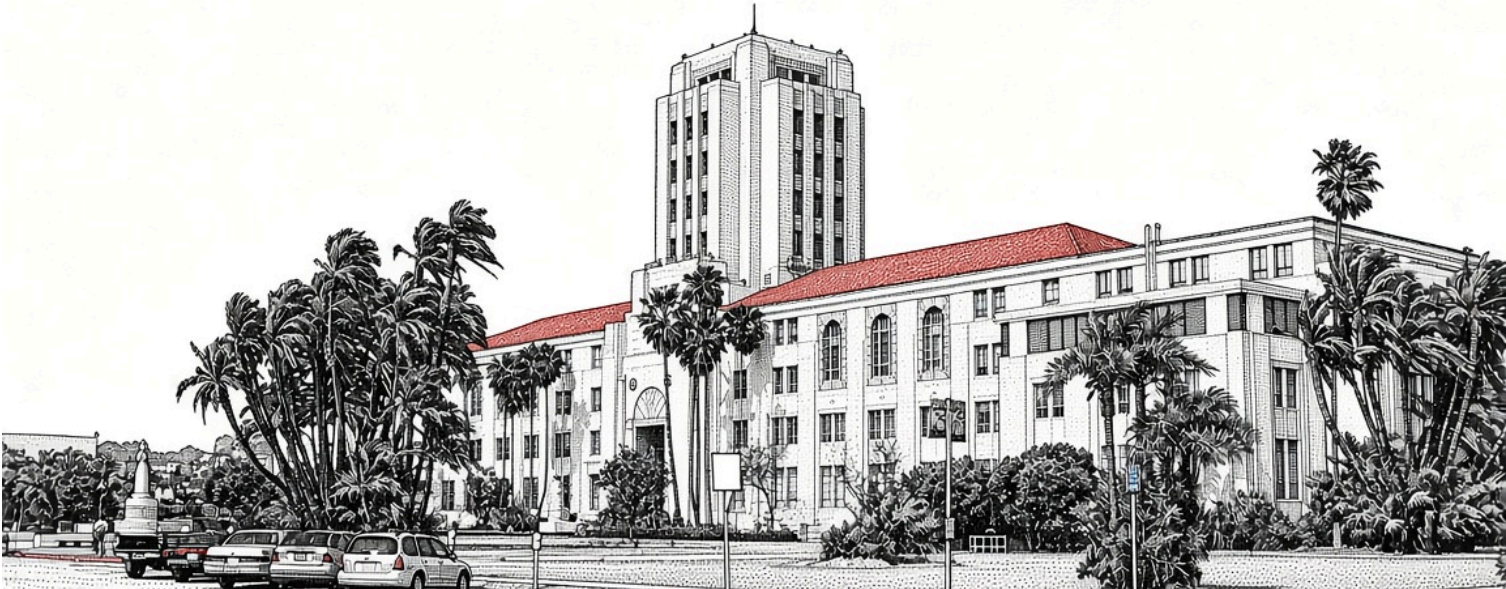


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Every year, hundreds of residents and County employees wake before the sun rises to take part in the annual Point-in-Time Count, a one-day snapshot of the region’s homeless population.

The County encourages community members to sign up to volunteer and support this year’s regional effort happening on Thursday, Jan. 29.

Yearly, County employees represent the largest single group of participants, with around 300 volunteering, on the clock, to take part. But it takes many more – about 1,700 in all – to effectively conduct the regional count.

The annual Point-in-Time Count is coordinated by San Diego’s Regional Task Force on Homelessness . It provides a one-day total of the number of people experiencing homelessness in San Diego County, including those in emergency shelters and safe parking lots.

“The Point-in-Time Count is a vital tool that helps us understand homelessness in our community and shape how we approach solutions,” said Dijana Beck, director of County Office of Homeless Solutions. “Every volunteer plays a critical role in ensuring we have accurate data to secure resources and create programs that make a real difference. We encourage County residents to join us in this effort.”

Registration is still open for the

Point in Time Count set to take place on Jan. 29 from 4 to 8 a.m. The Regional Task Force on Homelessness organizes and trains the 1,700 or so volunteers.

Those who sign up will go out in small groups to help conduct a brief survey and do a headcount of people they encounter living outside. Volunteers can select designated areas of the region to participate.

The information from the Point in Time surveys is used to apply for federal and state funding to help people experiencing homelessness and implement solutions on how to best serve them.

Results from the 2025 Point in Time Count showed 254 people experiencing homelessness (178 unsheltered, 76 sheltered) in the unincorporated communities. The unsheltered number dropped 11% from 2024 and is the lowest in 12 years.

Regionwide, the count showed 5,714 people unsheltered (down 6.5% from 2024) and 4,191 sheltered (down 7% from 2024).

The full report can be accessed through the San Diego Regional Task Force on Homelessness.

The County has multiple programs in place to help connect people to the services they need, including finding a stable place to live. People can find more information online from the Office of Homeless Solutions or by calling 2-1-1.

Since 2017, the County has invested more than \$334 million into affordable housing, using excess land, its Innovative Housing Trust Fund alongside other state, federal, and local funding sources administered by the County. Those funds have helped open doors to over 3,300 homes with 2,700 more on the way .

The County’s Housing Hub has more information about its efforts to meet the community’s needs.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 14, 2026

COUNTY
Board of Supervisors Appoints New County Counsel

The Board of Supervisors approved the appointment of Damon M. Brown as County Counsel after a national recruitment, bringing broad and diverse experience at the national, state and local levels.

Brown is a trial attorney and policy executive with over two decades of experience leading high-stakes litigation, regulatory enforcement and legal strategies across government and private practice.

He will lead the Office of County Counsel, the department that manages the County’s civil law needs. The office provides advisory and litigation support to the Board of Supervisors, County departments, County officers, boards, and commissions. It also represents the County in juvenile dependency matters and administers public liability claims.

Brown was most recently a Special Assistant Attorney General at the California Department of Justice, where he served as chief legal and policy advisor to Attorney General Rob Bonta on

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Board of Supervisors Appoints New County Counsel

civil rights, education, labor, public safety and immigration – guiding statewide initiatives and multistate litigation that shape national enforcement priorities.

Brown managed the Attorney General office’s complex federal accountability litigation involving civil and voting rights and immigration as one of its lead strategists, working with other state attorneys general, subject matter experts and community stakeholders.

He also previously served as City Attorney for Compton where he led the city’s legal operations. His private sector experience includes senior and partnership roles at firms, where he represented public agencies and multinational corporations in complex employment litigation and labor compliance.

Brown’s civic engagement spans decades. He has served on the boards of the Los Angeles County Bar Association and the Constitutional Rights Foundation and is the former president of the John M. Langston Bar Association of Los Angeles and the California Association of Black Lawyers. He is an adjunct professor at Loyola Law School, where he teaches constitutional law and state and local government and mentors aspiring attorneys, instilling in them a deep commitment to justice, ethics and public service.

Brown is a graduate of Vanderbilt University Law School and the University of California, Berkeley, where he earned degrees in African American Studies and Political Science.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 13, 2026

COUNTY

County Offices to Close for Martin Luther King Jr. Day

San Diego County public offices, family resource centers, public health clinics, libraries and animal shelters will be closed Monday, Jan. 19 for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day holiday.

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)

Community Teen Centers 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 offices will resume normal business hours Tuesday, Jan. 20.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 12, 2026

COUNTY

County Supervisors Select Chair for 2026

The County Board of Supervisors voted to select Chair Terra Lawson-Remer to continue as chair for 2026 during an organizational meeting Tuesday.

The chair acts as the official voice for the board. The chair also presides over its meetings and nominates other supervisors to various committees.

Vice Chair Monica Montgomery Steppe and Chair Pro Tempore Paloma Aguirre were chosen to continue serving in their current positions.

The County of San Diego provides programs and

services to support local communities, with a vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all.

Services for the entire region include social services and health programs, emergency preparedness, food and restaurant inspections, elections and more.

The County also has a large unincorporated area, in addition to 18 incorporated cities and 18 federally recognized tribes, where the County provides services similar to a city government. This includes things like law enforcement, roads, building permits, animal shelters and protection, along with parks and libraries.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 13, 2026

COUNTY

Additional Affordable Housing Headed to South Bay

An outdated motel in Chula Vista will soon be transformed into new affordable housing.

Palomar Point broke ground today at 1160 Walnut Avenue, the site of the former Palomar Motel, to begin renovations on 27 new permanent supportive housing units.

The apartment homes are for individuals experiencing homelessness with seven units designated for unhoused veterans served through the Housing Authority’s Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing or VASH program . Residents will have access to a case manager and activities coordinator to support their health and independence and offer services tailored to their individual needs.

Developed by Wakeland Housing, the rehabilitation project will convert each motel room into a studio apartment with a kitchenette. Renovations include new flooring, updated fixtures, a new roof, upgraded plumbing, electrical and HVAC

systems, fire sprinklers, accessibility improvements and stairway replacements.

The Palomar Point project is made possible through public/private partnerships between the State, County, the City of Chula Vista and Wakeland Housing.

Palomar Point was funded primarily through California’s Homekey+ grant program and the \$2.2 billion dollars allocated from Proposition 1 for permanent supportive housing. It is the first Homekey+ funded development in the County to break ground.

The County contributed 27 Section 8 Project Based Vouchers through the housing authority. These Project Based Vouchers support the on-going operating costs of the development and have an estimated value of \$694,980 annually and \$14 million over the next 20 years.

The estimated date of completion and grand reopening is December 2026.

Visit the Wakeland Housing website for more information about leasing opportunities.

Since 2017, the County has invested more than \$334 million into affordable housing, using excess land, its Innovative Housing Trust Fund alongside other state, federal, and local funding sources administered by the County. Those funds have helped open doors to over 3,400 homes with 2,600 more on the way .

The County’s Housing Hub has more information about its efforts to meet the needs of the community.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 13, 2026

COUNTY

County Public Health Officials Urge Childhood and Adolescent Vaccine Schedule

County public health officials continue to encourage

childhood and adolescent vaccinations recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

The County’s vaccine schedule aligns with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the West Coast Health Alliance . These recommendations follow a recent decision by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to modify its vaccine schedule .

Childhood and adolescent vaccines help protect against a variety of diseases and have safeguarded millions from serious illness and even death for decades.

The County recommends immunizations for hepatitis A, hepatitis B, rotavirus, meningococcal disease, RSV, flu and Covid at appropriate ages.

“All parents want their children to be healthy,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, M.D., M.P.H., County public health officer. “Maintaining a regular vaccination schedule remains the best way to protect our children, their peers and our community from preventable diseases. These vaccines have been studied for decades and it is important that parents and caregivers stay up to date on all recommended doses.”

Among the other recommended childhood vaccines are DTaP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis/whooping cough), MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella vaccine), chickenpox and polio.

Childhood and adolescent vaccines are covered by insurance and are available through your child’s pediatrician or healthcare provider or through the County’s public health clinics for those we are uninsured. More information on vaccines can be found on the Public Health Services’ Immunization Unit website.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 8, 2026

Statewide news

AROUND CALIFORNIA

CALIFORNIA

Claim of Nearly 449,000 Non-Citizens Disqualified From Jury Duty in California Renews Debate Over Voter Registration Accuracy

State Judicial Council data on disqualifications has been cited by critics as evidence of potential gaps in election safeguards, though fact-checkers call the link to registered voters unproven.

California taxpayers and election integrity advocates are once again highlighting the

reliability of the state’s voter registration system after a claim resurfaced that around 449,000 people were disqualified from jury service in a single year because of non-citizen status.

According to figures from the state’s Judicial Council, that total of individuals were disqualified from jury service due to non-citizen status. The data has drawn attention because critics claim many of those people were pulled from the same records used for voter rolls.

Critics argue the situation highlights weaknesses in

California’s Motor Voter program, which automatically registers people when they interact with the Department of Motor Vehicles. The program is meant to capture only eligible voters, yet critics say it has not prevented ineligible registrations.

The claim gained new visibility this weekend after conservative commentator Mila Joy posted about it on X, formerly Twitter. The post, which received more than 36,000 likes and millions of views, stated in part, "449,000 REGISTERED VOTERS couldn’t perform jury duty

because they weren’t citizens."

Tech executive Elon Musk amplified the discussion by reposting Joy’s message and asking, "Half a million known fraudulent voters?" His comment drew more than 133,000 likes and 24 million views.

U.S. Rep. Tim Burchett, a Republican from Tennessee, also shared the post and added, "But the Democrats said illegals weren’t voting."

California has allowed undocumented immigrants to obtain driver’s licenses since 2015 under AB 60, which has added millions of records to

the DMV database. Officials maintain that safeguards exist to separate citizens from non-citizens, but the jury disqualification numbers have fueled doubts among critics.

Left-leaning fact-checking organizations have described the specific interpretation linking all 449,000 directly to registered voters as unproven. They note that jury summons often pull from DMV records rather than voter lists exclusively.

Past reviews have identified problems. In 2018, state officials acknowledged that

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AROUND CALIFORNIA (CONTINUED)

Statewide news

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Claim of Nearly 449,000 Non-Citizens Disqualified From Jury Duty in California Renews Debate Over Voter Registration Accuracy

about 1,500 non-citizens had been registered to vote by mistake and said the errors were corrected.

The California Globe has reported on similar election integrity issues in recent years. A December 2025 article cited Department of Justice findings of more than 260,000 dead registrants and thousands of non-citizens on voter rolls nationwide, with California among states facing legal pressure to turn over complete records.

A separate effort to place a

voter identification measure on the November 2026 ballot collected more than one million signatures. Polls indicate that 71 percent of Californians support requiring proof of citizenship for first-time voter registration.

Federal lawsuits have targeted California and other states for not fully cooperating with requests for voter data. Earlier cases accused

the state of violating the National Voter Registration Act through improper handling of records.

Supporters of stricter rules say the latest jury duty data underscores the need for mandatory citizenship verification. Without such measures, they contend, the system remains open to error or misuse at significant cost to taxpayers and confidence in

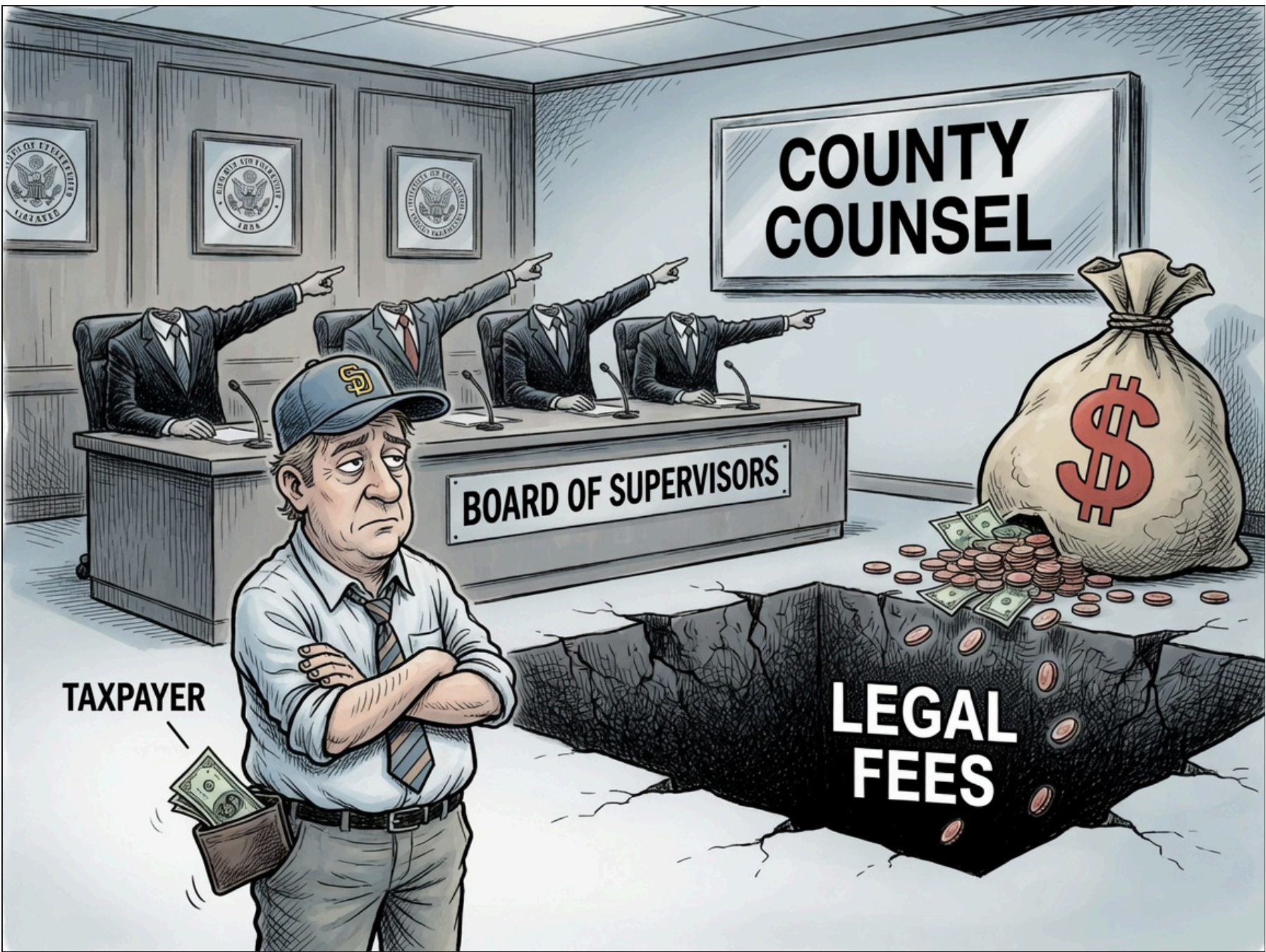
elections.

State election officials have not issued a new public response to the recirculated 449,000 figure. The debate continues as California prepares for future contests, with calls for tighter controls on registration and ballot processes.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Jan 12, 2026

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



New counsel, same old bill

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

How San Diego County Cities Managed Their Finances in 2024, According to Center for Public Accountability Director

John Moorlach examines per-resident fiscal health across local municipalities and highlights shifts among mid-tier performers.

A new analysis from the Center for Public Accountability reviews how various cities in San Diego County used their tax dollars and other resources last year, focusing on a key measure of financial flexibility.

Senior fellow and director

of the Center for Public Accountability John Moorlach explains that the review uses each city's population and its unrestricted net position for governmental activities, drawn directly from audited financial statements.

Dividing those two figures yields a per-person number that can be ranked from best to worst. A positive figure is desirable, while a negative one shows how much every resident would need to contribute to bring the balance to zero.

A negative per-capita unrestricted net position indicates poor fiscal management and the possibility of future local tax increases, Moorlach writes. The review finds that

half the cities finished the year in positive territory.

The other half are burdened with unfunded actuarial accrued liabilities from defined-benefit pension plans and retiree health benefits, also known as other post-employment benefits, he adds.

There was no movement in the rankings for the top five or bottom eight cities. Attention therefore turns to the five cities in the middle of the pack.

Moorlach reports that Solana Beach recorded revenues exceeding expenditures by \$10.7 million. The city moved \$5.1 million into restricted assets and \$2.7 million into net investment in

capital assets, leaving \$2.9 million to boost its unrestricted net position.

That improvement allowed Solana Beach to climb two spots in the ranking, passing Imperial Beach and San Marcos.

Imperial Beach generated \$5.4 million more in revenue than it spent. After directing \$1.1 million to restricted assets and \$4.5 million to capital investment, the city's unrestricted net position fell by \$200,000, causing it to slip one place.

San Marcos showed revenues over expenditures of \$19.9 million. It transferred \$2.9 million to restricted funds and \$15.5 million to

capital assets, resulting in a \$1.5 million gain in unrestricted net position, much of it tied to construction in progress. The city dropped one position.

Lemon Grove posted \$7.0 million in surplus revenue and a \$3.5 million prior-period adjustment related to reclassifying certain land holdings, as explained in note 18 of its financial statements.

After shifting \$1.9 million into restricted assets and \$5.5 million into capital investment, the city's unrestricted net position rose by \$3.1 million, lifting it one spot in the ranking.

The most dramatic change

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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

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How San Diego County Cities Managed Their Finances in 2024, According to Center for Public Accountability Director

came in Oceanside, which recorded a \$59 million surplus of revenues over expenditures. Yet after transferring \$76.3 million into restricted assets—including \$71.6 million placed in a vaguely labeled “general government” account—and allocating \$38.9 million to capital assets, the city’s unrestricted net position dropped \$56.3 million.

That swing pushed Oceanside into an unrestricted net deficit of \$4.4 million. The annual comprehensive financial report offered no footnote explanation for the large “general government” transfer, leaving residents to consult council minutes or contact the finance director for answers, Moorlach notes.

Overall, the cities reviewed generally kept general expenses within the amount of revenues collected during the fiscal year. San Diego County has become the second of nine California districts to release its annual comprehensive financial reports.

The author expresses hope that all 18 will maintain satisfactory revenues and deliver more prompt reporting for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jan 13, 2026

COMMENTARY
Why Cities Ignore Their Own Balance Sheets at Their Peril, Argues California Policy Center Fellow

Mark Moses says *municipalities already possess audited financial statements that could serve as vital early-warning systems, yet routinely neglect them in favor of short-term spending.*

For years, cities have turned to various metrics and scoring systems in attempts to gauge their fiscal health. The Government Finance Officers Association even offers a “Fiscal First Aid” program with a detailed process for evaluation. Yet these initiatives have failed to enhance cities’ ability to handle their finances responsibly.

A recent report from the National League of Cities shows that the share of finance officers optimistic about meeting their jurisdiction’s financial needs fell sharply from 64 percent to 45 percent in a single year. Every municipality already produces a comprehensive, third-party audited assessment of its financial condition in the form of its statement of net position – the governmental equivalent of a balance sheet.

This document, part of annual audited financial statements, reveals what resources an agency controls, what obligations it faces, and whether it can meet future

demands. It details assets such as cash, investments and infrastructure; liabilities including debt, pension obligations and retiree medical costs; and the resulting net position, which is the difference between the two.

Mark Moses, a senior fellow with the California Policy Center and author of “The Municipal Financial Crisis,” writes that while some dismiss these statements by claiming “government is not a business,” the underlying mathematics of assets versus liabilities remains a critical indicator of long-term sustainability.

When a city’s net position trends downward, Moses argues, it signals that current services are being financed at the expense of future residents – an intergenerational injustice. A worsening negative net position also serves as an early indicator of potential threats to financial solvency. Without sufficient assets to cover liabilities, agencies typically respond by raising taxes, increasing borrowing, deferring maintenance or allowing services to deteriorate.

Moses contends that greater attention to balance sheets would enable leaders to act before they and their residents are backed into a corner. Yet aversion to these financial reports is longstanding. Governmental accounting mixes cash and accrual methods, creating confusion, and the Governmental Accounting Standards Board has issued more than 100 rules over five

decades to address government’s expanding activities.

Public agencies have moved into commercial ventures, land deals, charitable work, complex pensions and leasing arrangements that blur traditional lines. Council members tend to focus only on immediately available funds regardless of their source, viewing the measurement of assets against liabilities as an irritating distraction.

This resistance dates back decades. Most municipalities initially opposed requirements to inventory and report physical assets such as streets, buildings and equipment. Organizations like Truth in Accounting emphasize key metrics including debt and net position, but municipal budgeting practices remain largely unaffected.

Moses asks whether anyone has ever heard a city council inquire how a proposed vote or major expenditure would affect its balance sheet. Without that fundamental question, transparency is just an illusion. The widespread neglect of these statements allows municipalities to deny they are overextended while boasting about data-driven decisions.

Even the California State Auditor has discontinued its Local High-Risk Dashboard, which relied heavily on balance-sheet data; the California Policy Center has stepped in to continue that work. Moses argues that

balance sheets will stay undervalued as long as leaders operate on a treadmill of spending whatever funds are on hand, especially when government missions remain vague and scopes unbounded.

Only clearly defined missions and limited agency scopes are compatible with responsible balance-sheet management, Moses writes. Municipal leaders must stop treating the statement of net position as an accounting relic and begin using it as an early-warning system.

He recommends creating a one-page dashboard that distills key figures, including net position, from voluminous annual reports for public understanding. Every major staff report – particularly those on labor agreements – should include projections of long-term effects on assets and liabilities. Financial targets for healthy net position should be set with the understanding that government exists to serve residents and businesses, not the reverse.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jan 13, 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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