

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

Learn About County's Budget Process, Get a Say on Priorities



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The County Board of Supervisors will offer a budget workshop and set aside a time for community input on budget priorities on Tuesday, Jan. 27.

Residents can learn more about how the County's budget process works, where funding comes from, about restrictions on how a great portion of funding is spent and how decisions are made.

The budget workshop begins at 3 p.m. and community input on budget priorities starts at 5 p.m. in the Board Chambers.

The County's budget is a two-year plan called the Operational Plan. The Board of Supervisors will adopt a budget for the first year and make recommendations for the second year.

The fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Currently, the County is operating under the 2025-26 Adopted Budget. Work is getting underway on the 2026-27 budget that will take effect July 1.

Community input at Tuesday's meeting will be combined with resident feedback taken throughout the year to help shape budget priorities.

To learn more about additional opportunities to give input, important dates in the budget process, information on what the County does and how the budget is shaped, visit the County's Open Budget webpage.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 20, 2026

COUNTY

Measuring What Matters: County Launches Key Performance Indicators

The County of San Diego is using a new way to measure the impact of its work.

The County developed 26 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to not only focus on performance but also identify areas for growth and opportunity. These KPIs will serve as a tool to measure how the County can better serve residents in the region.

While data and dashboards have long been part of County operations, KPIs bring them together in a central place that allows for a clearer big picture view.

They track overall performance, measure the success of the strategic plan, ensure data informs both operations and long-term planning, connect values to outcomes and align work across departments and initiatives.

These indicators are aligned with the County's five strategic initiatives : community, empower, equity, justice and sustainability and reporting will occur annually, with quarterly updates for staff. The indicators include:

Small-Local Contract Spend KPI: 18% of County contract spend is to small-local businesses. Why it matters : When the County awards contracts to more small and local businesses, including nonprofits, veteran-owned businesses, and organizations that advance equity, it helps build a more inclusive and equitable economy. These entities create local jobs, meet community needs and keep taxpayer dollars circulating within San Diego's economy.

Employee Engagement KPI: 86% of employees surveyed were "somewhat" or "fully" engaged. Why it matters: Every two years, the County surveys its employees to understand how they feel about their jobs and about the County as a workplace. The survey is a way to strengthen trust and two-way

communication between staff and leadership.

Justice System Data Availability KPI: 80% of justice system-related programs make data publicly available. Why it matters: The County tracks how many justice system programs share data with the public to support transparency and accountability. By making reports and tools easier to access and use, the County builds public trust and helps people better understand the work of the justice system.

Greenhouse Gas Emission KPI: Tracks Greenhouse Gas Emissions from County Operations Why it matters: Lowering our emissions every year means cleaner air, healthier residents, and steady progress toward the County's long-term environmental goals. By monitoring greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sticking to our reduction target of at least 1% each year, over time the County lowers its carbon footprint and improves regional air quality and public health.

To learn more about all the KPIs, visit the KPI site .

County of San Diego news release · Jan 15, 2026

COUNTY

Spirit Fund Lives on to Help Injured Shelter Animals

A fund set up to help an abused puppy survive in 2008 continues to help other animals get intensive medical care.

The video of an abused puppy at the U.S.-Mexico border broke the hearts of animal lovers, locally and across the country. The cruel act led to an outpouring of public donations for her medical care.

Spirit, named for her trust, affection and loving personality despite all she endured, received the care she needed to recover. She lived a full life as the beloved member of a San Diego family until her passing last month at the age of 17.

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

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Spirit Fund Lives on to Help Injured Shelter Animals

County Animal Services established the Spirit Fund in 2008 with money initially donated for the dog’s care. They made it a permanent fund for the care of other animals who come into the shelter with medical needs beyond what a shelter veterinarian can provide.

Typically, this involves complex and costly treatments that must be done by a veterinary hospital, such as surgery for abused animals, amputations resulting from neglect, intestinal obstructions, orthopedic corrections and other serious injuries.

The care offers a sick or injured animal a strong chance to recover so they can be adopted into a loving, forever home.

Every dollar donated to the Spirit Fund goes to animal care. Shelter administrative costs are never deducted.

Members of the public can

donate online or write checks payable to Department of Animal Services. Write “Donation for Spirit Fund” in the memo field, and mail it to 5821 Sweetwater Road, Bonita, CA 91902. All donations to the Department of Animal Services are tax deductible. The shelter’s tax identification number is 95-6000934.

Those who prefer to donate supplies may visit the department’s Amazon wish list which lists items such as treats, toys and pet crates for the animals in the County’s care.

County of San Diego news release · Jan 15, 2026

COUNTY
 First Hantavirus Detection of 2026

The County detected hantavirus in a Western harvest mouse found near Los Penasquitos Ranch House (92129) during a routine inspection, moving it to advise people to take precautions in sheds, garages or attics in case there have been infected

rodents living in those areas.

This is the first rodent to test positive for hantavirus in 2026.

Finding hantavirus in wild rodents is not uncommon in San Diego County, there were a total of 16 cases in 2025. However, people rarely come into direct contact with infected animals because wild rodents naturally avoid humans.

While exposure to the potentially deadly hantavirus is rare, people should be careful around wild rodents and places where they nest as there is no cure or vaccine for hantavirus.

Symptoms of hantavirus usually develop between 1 to 8 weeks after exposure and include:

If you think that you may have been exposed to hantavirus, seek medical attention immediately.

People can be exposed to hantavirus when wild rodents invade their living or storage areas. Infected rodents shed the virus in their

urine, feces and saliva. Once the matter dries, it can be stirred into the air where people could inhale the virus.

If people find wild rodents, nests, or their droppings in their living or storage spaces, they should always use “wet cleaning” methods — using bleach or other disinfectants, rubber gloves and bags. They should NOT sweep or vacuum, which could stir hantavirus into the air where it could be inhaled.

Seal up all external holes larger than a dime in homes, garages, and sheds to keep rodents from getting in.

Eliminate rodent infestations immediately.

Avoid rodent-infested areas and do not stir up dust or materials that may be contaminated with rodent poop and urine.

Clean up rodent poop and urine using the “wet cleaning” methods described below.

Ventilate the affected area by opening doors and windows for at least 30 minutes

before starting to clean.

Use rubber gloves. Spray a 10 percent bleach solution or other disinfectants onto dead rodents, rodent poop, nests, contaminated traps and surrounding areas, then let the disinfectant stand for at least 15 minutes before cleaning.

Clean with a sponge or a mop that has been soaked in disinfectant.

Place disinfected rodents and debris into two plastic bags, seal them and discard them in the trash.

Wash gloves in a bleach solution, then soap and water, and dispose of them using the same double-bag method.

Thoroughly wash your hands with soap and water.

More information on hantavirus prevention and wet cleaning methods can be found on the County’s Vector Control Program webpage for Hantavirus .

County of San Diego news release · Jan 16, 2026

BUSINESS

[San Diego commerce & the regional economy](#)



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BUSINESS
 Member Spotlight – Lagoon Concept Store

Located in San Diego’s vibrant Convoy District, the Lagoon Concept Store Showroom reflects the city’s strong connection to design, outdoor living, and commercial innovation. As the West Coast showroom for Lagoon Furniture, the space serves as a resource for hospitality groups, architects, and design firms seeking well-crafted furniture solutions designed for high-performance environments.

Founded in 2014, Lagoon Furniture develops indoor and outdoor furniture with a focus on performance,

comfort, and long-term use. Lagoon works closely with hospitality operators and design professionals to deliver furniture solutions that meet the demands of commercial spaces. Lagoon’s furniture is manufactured in Mexico and distributed through Otay Mesa, supporting efficient production and dependable delivery throughout Southern California. This regional approach allows Lagoon to maintain consistent quality, responsive timelines, and scalable solutions for commercial projects of varying size and scope.

The San Diego Concept Store Showroom offers a curated environment where hospitality and design professionals can experience Lagoon’s materials, construction, and product versatility firsthand. More than a display space, the showroom represents Lagoon’s continued investment in San Diego’s growing design, development, and business community.

By pairing thoughtful manufacturing with a strong local presence, Lagoon Furniture continues to support the hospitality and design industries

with dependable products, streamlined logistics, and a shared commitment to creating welcoming, high-performing commercial spaces across the San Diego region.

As a member of the San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, Lagoon Furniture is proud to support and strengthen the region’s hospitality, design, and business communities—and beyond—through innovation, collaboration, and lasting impact.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Jan 15, 2026

STARTING A BUSINESS IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY?

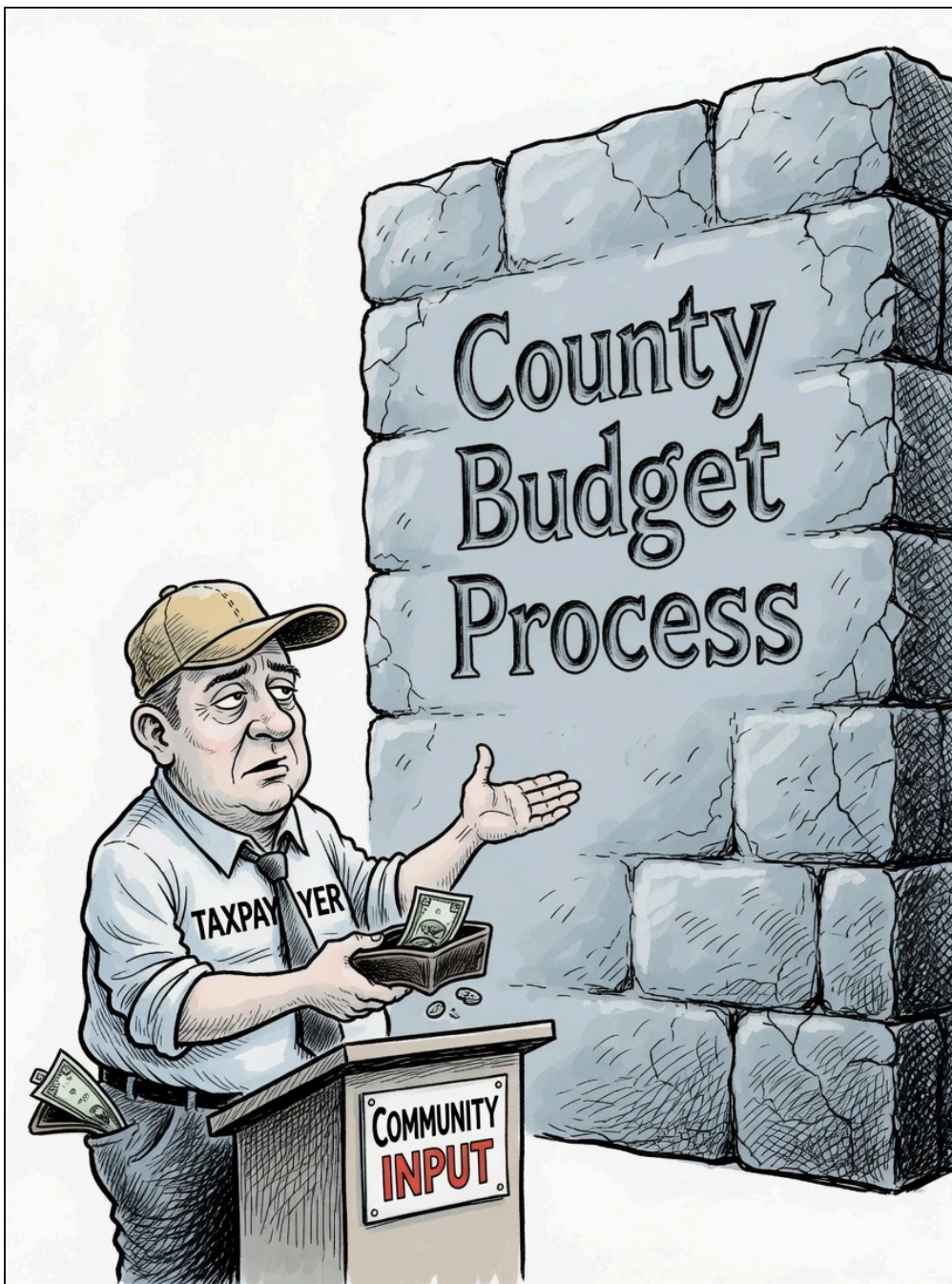
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THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion

*Your say on priorities?*

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

Six Practical Steps to Rescue America's Failing Classrooms, Says Retired Teacher

Larry Sand argues that schools need a return to basics rather than more money or political slogans.

American public schools cannot be fixed by pouring in additional funds or repeating empty catchphrases, according to Larry Sand.

The retired California teacher, who attended public schools in the 1950s and 1960s, taught in the early 1970s, and continued in the classroom until 2009, says he has witnessed the steady decline of the education system firsthand.

In a new commentary, Sand writes that recovery depends on restoring proven fundamentals such as clear teaching, strict order, teacher accountability and an environment centered on actual learning.

He offers six concrete changes that he believes must be enacted without delay.

First, schools should remove all radical political and sexual content from the curriculum, Sand argues.

He claims that left-wing

ideology has become commonplace, with diversity, equity and inclusion policies that prioritize racial quotas over merit.

According to Sand, many students are now taught that white heterosexual men bear responsibility for every form of oppression, while advanced courses and standardized testing have been dropped on the grounds that they are racist.

At the same time, he writes, gender ideology has spread widely, with the Heritage Foundation reporting that 16 states require lessons on transgender topics.

The organization's report defines this approach as replacing neutral biological facts with concepts such as "gender identity," "sex assigned at birth" and "cisgender."

Second, Sand calls for a nationwide return to phonics-based reading instruction.

He points out that Louisiana, despite spending far less per pupil than most states, now sees its fourth-graders outperform nearly every other state in reading.

That improvement, he explains, stems from requiring phonics, overhauling teacher

training, and mandating 50 hours of science-of-reading instruction for every kindergarten-through-third-grade teacher and principal.

Even California has begun to shift, Sand notes, citing the new law AB 1454 that requires evidence-based reading materials and training.

He recalls that the state's earlier embrace of the whole-language method in the 1980s led to a sharp drop in scores; only 12 percent of California fourth-graders reached proficiency in 1992 and 11 percent in 1996.

Third, order must be restored in every classroom, the former teacher insists.

Sand says that when one student misbehaves, instruction halts while the teacher turns into a disciplinarian, and other children often begin acting out as well.

He criticizes blue states for treating discipline as something to be minimized.

California, for example, bars suspensions for willful disobedience and similar minor infractions, while Massachusetts requires schools to try and document multiple alternatives before suspending anyone.

Although suspensions are

not a complete solution, Sand writes, they at least protect students who want to learn.

Fourth, greater emphasis must be placed on teacher quality, beginning with colleges of education.

Sand quotes economist Walter Williams, who called those programs "the academic slums of most any college," and cites a study in the Education Policy Analysis Archives that found education majors face far lower grading standards than other students.

Heather Peske, president of the National Council on Teacher Quality, adds that states must do more to prepare and support teachers from the start of their training through their first years in the classroom.

One promising reform, according to Sand, would be replacing the rigid step-and-column salary schedule with merit pay that rewards effectiveness rather than years served or irrelevant training courses.

Fifth, the influence of teachers' unions must be curtailed, he argues.

Sand calls them "probably the worst thing to happen to education in the last 50

years," saying they shield ineffective teachers and promote ideological agendas.

Leaked training materials from the National Education Association, released by the parent group Defending Education, show the union coaching teachers to advance gender and racial ideology, fight Republicans, and use terms such as "arsenal of racist dog whistles" and "transphobic tropes."

Although eliminating the unions entirely is unrealistic, Sand writes that teachers should stop supporting them.

Finally, schools should ban cellphones during class.

Data from the Program for International Student Assessment show that students who spend less than one hour on digital devices during the school day score roughly 50 points higher in math.

Even students who are not using their own phones are distracted by others, Sand notes, and 45 percent of students report feeling nervous or anxious without their devices nearby.

PISA director Andreas Schleicher confirms that students distracted by

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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

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Six Practical Steps to Rescue America’s Failing Classrooms, Says Retired Teacher

classmates’ screens perform worse.
Sand acknowledges that his list is not exhaustive but says it offers a solid starting point.
For the sake of the children

and the nation, he concludes, these changes must be put in place immediately.
San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Jan 21, 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.

SAN DIEGO NEWSLINE

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