

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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DOWNTOWN

County Employees Start Donating to 42nd Annual Blood Drive



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Hundreds of employees will take part in the lifesaving 42nd annual County Blood Drive this April. The month-long event kicked off Wednesday outside the downtown County Administration Center in front of the San Diego Blood Bank's mobile donation center.

It is the third longest running blood drive in the San Diego Blood Bank's history and helps supply the approximately 350 pints of blood local hospitals need each day. One in seven people entering a hospital need blood.

"Every day, hospitals in our region rely on a steady supply of blood to perform lifesaving care, yet the need consistently outpaces the supply," said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, M.D., M.P.H., County public health officer. "By donating, County employees are supporting residents and visitors who may be undergoing cancer treatments, surgeries, deliveries, or may need blood for other reasons."

A single donation can help save up to three lives, and all blood types are needed. Type O blood remains in especially high demand. O positive is the most common and O negative blood is the universal donor.

"About 62% of the U.S. population is eligible to donate blood but only about 3% donate each year," said Chair Pro Tempore Paloma Aguirre. "We can do better. The County's drive is making a difference. To date we have impacted more than 60,000 lives, and by association those of their loved

ones."

The County also joined the Community Guardians Program, a network of organizations that advocate for blood donation and help strengthen the region's blood supply.

Currently, the San Diego Blood Bank also has a Guardians Circle program and more than 13,400 members donate on average four times a year—double the national average. Residents can join by pledging to donate regularly through the San Diego Blood Bank's website.

The County's annual blood drive is among the largest collection events organized by the San Diego Blood Bank. Both County and non-County employees are welcome to sign up and donate.

County of San Diego news release · Apr 1, 2026

COUNTY

County Kicks Off Week of Action to Promote Workers' Rights and Support Local Businesses

The County's Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement (OLSE) launched its fourth annual Week of Action on Wednesday, bringing workers, local businesses, and community partners together to highlight labor rights and fair workplace practices across the region.

The Week of Action opened with a community breakfast at the Balboa Park Club Ballroom, where County leaders, public officials, worker advocates and community members underscored the importance of protecting workers from wage theft, ensuring employer compliance and creating safer, more equitable workplaces.

"This is a moment for us to come together with our community and partners to uplift the work being done to support workers in San Diego County who have faced wage theft and other challenges with employers," said Branden Butler, director of OLSE.

The Office of Labor Standards and Enforcement works with partners, including the District Attorney's Office, the California Labor Commissioner and the Employee Rights Center to provide education, outreach and enforcement of local labor laws. As of March 2026, the office has helped hundreds of workers recover more than \$146,000 in unpaid wages.

"There was a woman who was forced to pay for her own motel room and made to clean additional rooms with the promise she would be paid later," said District Attorney Summer Stephan. "Through our partnership with OLSE and the state labor commissioner, we were able to ensure she was protected and recovered \$13,000 in unpaid wages."

A worker supported by OLSE encouraged others to speak up. "I think everyone should stand up for their rights," said Liliya Tchistiak, a wage theft victim. "Unfortunately, I was the only worker at that restaurant who got money back. Everyone else gave up."

Workers or employers seeking information about labor rights or wage theft can contact OLSE at olse@sdcounty.ca.gov or 619-531-5129.

Know Your Workplace Rights Workshop Thursday, March 26 at 5 p.m., Spring Valley County Library, 836 Kempton St. Spring Valley, CA 91977

Learn about minimum wage, breaks, overtime, sick time and tips. Offered in English and Spanish, with a light dinner provided. RSVP online .

Health and Legal Clinic Saturday, March 28 from 9–11 a.m., Employee Rights Center, 4161 Home Ave. San

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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County Kicks Off Week of Action to Promote Workers’ Rights and Support Local Businesses

Diego, CA 92105

Free resources: food distribution, diaper giveaways, vaccines and legal, mental, dental and health resources. Free parking is available.

The County Board of Supervisors recently adopted a resolution to call on the state and federal governments to formally rename annual observances and events dedicated to César Chávez. On March 25, the County Board of Supervisors also directed the County’s Chief Administrative Officer to take action to rename César Chávez Day to Farmworkers Day through changes in the County Administrative Code and Compensation Ordinance and return to the Board on April 21.

The County remains committed to protecting workers and upholding labor standards that promote fairness, dignity, and accountability—values that extend far beyond

the legacy of any one person.

County of San Diego news release · Mar 26, 2026

COUNTY

County of San Diego Joins Other Counties Across State to Call for Protection of Safety Net Programs

The County of San Diego is joining other counties to urge state leaders to protect safety net programs from federal cuts.

H.R. 1, passed by the U.S. Congress in July, shifts billions of dollars in ongoing costs for health care, food assistance and other safety net programs from the federal government to states and counties. It also creates new eligibility restrictions.

The California State Association of Counties estimates the impact on the state and local level could be up to \$9.5 billion per year.

Counties are proposing a multi-year partnership with a \$1.9 billion investment in the upcoming state budget for Fiscal Year 26-27, and \$4.5 billion the following year to prevent widespread disruption

to essential services.

The plan was developed in collaboration with county associations representing elected leaders, department heads and staff.

“We are working together to ensure those who rely on these services for nutrition, healthcare and other needs will have the support they need,” said County of San Diego Chief Administrative Officer Ebony Shelton. “It will take a commitment from the state and our fellow counties to make that happen.”

Without funding from the state, there will be significant impacts. The County will need to consider adjusting service levels and priorities, at a time when the County is facing additional fiscal challenges including slowing revenue and increased costs.

San Diego County continues to work with partners at the state and local level to identify solutions, including a new philanthropic partnership with the San Diego Foundation .

Learn more about the budget process and provide input using an online survey and a

budget Priority tool on the County’s Engage San Diego County Budget page .

County of San Diego news release · Mar 26, 2026

COUNTY

Resources and Guidance for Noncitizens Impacted by CalFresh Eligibility Changes

Starting April 1, 2026, a change in federal law will make some noncitizens newly ineligible for CalFresh.

Noncitizens already enrolled including asylees and refugees, will have their eligibility reviewed at their next renewal.

You may still qualify. Submit renewal paperwork on time so a caseworker can review your eligibility.

Keep your contact information updated: In your BenefitsCal portal; or

By calling the Access Line (1-866-262-9881); or

Respond right away if the County contacts you and submit all required paperwork.

You can also get support from the County Office of Immigrant and Refugee

Affairs , which connects people to additional resources.

There are many free food assistance options in San Diego County, regardless of immigration status:

211sandiego.org offers a countywide list of food resources.

The San Diego Food Bank maintains an online map of emergency food distribution sites, searchable by ZIP code, open times and eligibility.

Feeding San Diego hosts pop up distributions at locations around the County and maintains an online map of food distributions and pantries.

Jewish Family Service holds weekly drive-through distributions.

The County provides access and enrollment to public safety net programs in support of its mission to strengthen our communities – which include nearly 400,000 residents who receive CalFresh benefits and more than 800,000 who are enrolled in Medi-Cal.

County of San Diego news release · Mar 26, 2026

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

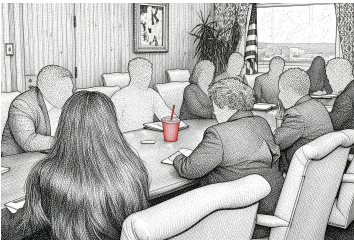


Illustration from a photo by Department of Housing and Urban Development. Office of the Chief Human Capital O · Wikimedia Commons, Public domain

BUSINESS

Chamber Joins State Coalitions

The Chamber has joined two state coalition letters on two important bills affecting our regional economy. We have joined the opposition to Assembly Bill 1777 (Garcia) and have joined the support effort for AB 2552 (Avila

Farias).

AB 1777 (Garcia) would give the California Air Resources Board (CARB) broad authority to regulate indirect source emissions. This means that warehouses would be punished for the emissions of vehicles visiting them. They would be required to make significant and costly upgrades in order to come into compliance with new regulations. The air regulator for the Los Angeles and Inland Empire, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, passed a similar rule, which has already led to less economic investment in the transportation and logistics

industry in the LA basin and Inland Empire. We joined this coalition to oppose the bill and its costly new regulations.

AB 2552 (Avila Farias) would provide needed cleanup to legislation last year that created a VMT Mitigation Banking system for housing development across California. This would impose onerous new fees on development projects, making already expensive housing even more unaffordable. We are supporting this cleanup bill to not allow this and as part of our continued advocacy for lower housing costs.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Mar 20, 2026

BUSINESS

Chamber Joins State Coalitions

Chamber VP of International and Public Affairs, Kenia Zamarripa, and International and Policy Advisor, Myriam Mendoza, met with the Tecate Chamber of Commerce for Services and Tourism (CANACO SERVYTUR) to discuss opportunities for collaboration. The meeting builds on last year’s visit to Tecate as part of a series of engagements across the CaliBaja region, where staff met with

local business leaders and elected officials, including Tecate Mayor Roman Cota. This latest conversation provided an opportunity to reconnect with the Tecate business community, meet CANACO SERVYTUR’s new leadership, and hear about upcoming initiatives in the region.

The city of Tecate is also preparing for its annual celebration of the region’s vibrant gastronomy scene, COCINARTE , which will take place on September 5 th .

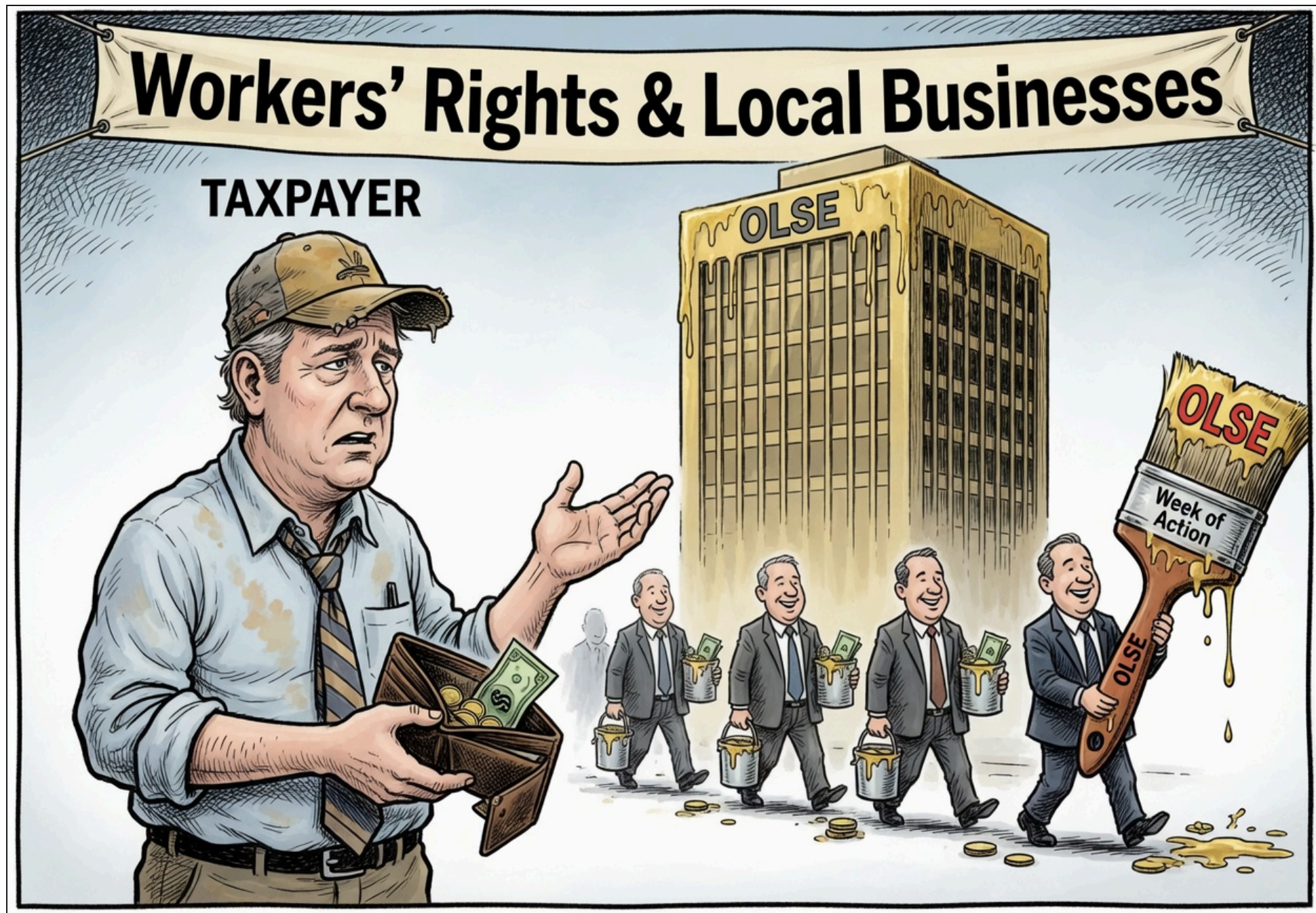
San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Mar 20, 2026

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THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

California Risks Following Massachusetts and New York Into Economic Decline

Policy choices on taxes and regulation could erode the state's innovation edge, warns Marc Joffe, a visiting fellow at the California Policy Center.

California stands at a critical juncture this year as voters select their next governor and weigh a major tax proposal, according to Marc Joffe, a visiting fellow at the California Policy Center.

Joffe argues that the outcome will determine if the state sustains its position as a global leader in technology or enters a prolonged downturn.

Joffe writes that the three leading Democratic candidates for governor all receive substantial support from organized labor, particularly public employee unions.

He predicts that any of them would likely pursue higher taxes and stricter rules in line with union priorities if elected.

Even more concerning, according to Joffe, is the proposed 2026 Billionaire Tax Act, which is collecting signatures for the November

ballot.

The measure would apply a one-time 5 percent excise tax on net worth above \$1 billion, using a retroactive residency test as of January 1, 2026.

Joffe notes that this aggressive approach has already prompted several prominent job creators to leave the state.

Joffe contends that combining a union-aligned governor with this tax on innovation would set California on the same path taken by Massachusetts and New York.

Those states, he observes, still benefit from past breakthroughs but are losing ground.

Massachusetts received a "D+" grade for business friendliness from CNBC and ranked near the bottom for cost of doing business in 2025.

In 2022 it enacted a 4 percent surtax on income over \$1 million.

A May 2025 study by the Pioneer Institute found that Massachusetts was one of just four states to lose private-sector jobs compared with pre-2020 levels while the nation expanded.

Boston, despite hosting top research centers, advanced a union-supported rule

requiring a "human safety operator" in every autonomous vehicle, which Waymo said would prevent large-scale rollout.

Joffe points out that this technology already operates successfully in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Atlanta, Austin and Miami.

New York presents a comparable case, according to Joffe.

Texas overtook New York in financial jobs in 2024, employing 519,000 compared with New York's 507,000.

New York City's financial sector cut 8,400 positions from January through August 2025 after gaining jobs in the same period the year before.

Goldman Sachs is constructing a large facility in Dallas, and JPMorgan now has more staff in Texas than in New York.

Governor Kathy Hochul pulled back a proposal to legalize robotaxis after failing to win legislative backing, slowing commercial growth while other states advance.

Waymo plans its next expansions in places like Dallas, Houston and Nashville, where rules are less restrictive.

Joffe explains that the

underlying force in both states is the political influence of unions, especially government ones, which use donations, voter turnout and legislative pressure.

This creates rules that favor current workers and established businesses over new ideas and entrants, he writes.

Joffe stresses this is not an attack on workers or pay but a warning about any interest group gaining enough power to prioritize its members over the wider economy.

In California, the impact appears clearly in Los Angeles, where the entertainment sector has shrunk sharply beyond what streaming changes alone would cause.

Los Angeles County shed about 42,000 film and television positions from 2022 to late 2024, falling from roughly 142,000 to 100,000 workers.

Television production in the area dropped 58 percent from its 2021 high, going from 18,560 shoot days to 7,716 in 2024.

On-location filming decreased another 22 percent in the first quarter of 2025.

The president of FilmLA stated, "Right now, we've just

come out of the worst year on record, excluding COVID, in 2024 for the amount of on-location filming happening."

Many projects have shifted to Georgia, the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia, which provide lower costs and greater labor flexibility.

California now stands sixth worldwide in filming activity.

The industry still contributes tens of billions in wages, but that flow faces growing threats.

Joffe warns that the wealth tax could push out additional high-income residents and harm the tech hub in the Bay Area.

The state saw a net loss of about 216,000 residents through domestic migration in 2024-25, the highest in the nation.

Those departing report higher average incomes than newcomers, according to IRS figures, which could shrink the tax base while increasing needs for services like Medi-Cal.

In 2025, companies including Chevron, John Paul Mitchell Systems and Realtor.com moved out, joining earlier exits by Tesla,

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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

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California Risks Following Massachusetts and New York Into Economic Decline

Oracle and others whose leaders now reside in Texas or Florida.

Joffe argues that California's advantages have come not from government action but from what Sacramento has permitted: an environment open to risk,

invention and building capital and talent.

Although flawed, Gov. Gavin Newsom shielded the tech sector by vetoing Teamster-supported bills that would have mandated human drivers in self-driving cars.

Voters must now decide if the next governor will show similar independence.

The leading Democratic hopefuls have won backing from most major unions, and the Teamsters have indicated their endorsement depends

on shielding members from what they term "Big Tech's assault on workers' livelihoods."

Joffe writes that such a stance, if followed, would limit autonomous vehicles, AI tools and other advances developed over decades in Silicon Valley.

Pairing any of those candidates with the wealth tax would replicate the mix of steep taxes and anti-innovation rules now pulling Massachusetts and New York downward.

Data from states that chose that route is clear, he says, as is evidence from those that avoided it, including Texas, Florida, Georgia and Tennessee.

California in 2026 retains its universities, skilled networks, venture funding and history to stay the top innovation center worldwide.

What it requires from leaders and voters is simply the discipline to avoid interfering.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · Mar 31, 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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