

San Diego Newsline

Downtown San Diego news — the budget, public safety, business, and the civic life of America's Finest City

WHAT'S NEWS

COUNTY

County Announces New Director and Deputy Director of Animal Services

COUNTY

Building Trust and Teamwork: Inside the Youth Athletic Leadership Academy

COUNTY

Weekend Tijuana River Valley H2S Emissions Exceeded Federal Guideline

COUNTY

County Urges Residents Throw Out Cheddar Cheese Linked to E.coli Outbreak

COUNTY

Affordable Housing Helps Family of Six Build a New Life

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight – Navy Region Southwest

BUSINESS

Chamber Joins State Coalitions

CALIFORNIA

Newsom Sends Another \$145 Million to Local Governments for Homelessness Programs

INSIDE

Downtown, City & County — 2
Business — 2
Around California — 3
Cartoon — 4
Commentary — 4

COUNTY

County Announces New Director and Deputy Director of Animal Services



Illustration

The County has appointed a new Director and Deputy Director of Animal Services, strengthening the department’s leadership as it continues to provide animal care, public safety and community support across the region.

Dr. Briana Sarvis has been named Director of Animal Services. She has served as Acting Director since February and joined the County as Chief Veterinarian in 2025. Dr. Sarvis brings extensive experience in veterinary medicine, shelter operations and animal health. In her new role, she will continue supporting the department’s work to protect animals, assist pet owners and respond to community needs.

Kendra King has been appointed Deputy Director of Animal Services. King comes to the County from the Humane Society of Ventura County, where she spent more than a decade in field operations, humane investigations and emergency response. She previously served as a lead Humane Officer before advancing into management roles overseeing field services and investigations.

Both leaders also maintain strong personal connections to animal care and the region.

Dr. Sarvis and her family share their home with goats, chickens, ponies, cats, dogs and bunnies—and enjoy gardening, though the goats sometimes get to the vegetables first.

King has close family ties to Fallbrook and lives with her two dogs, Gus and Nyx, along with her

horse, Levi.

County Animal Services promotes the humane and responsible care of pets by providing the unincorporated areas of San Diego County with 24-hour animal rescues; helping those who can no longer care for their pets; investigating and stopping animal cruelty or neglect; enforcing state and local laws related to animals as needed; and educating the public about responsible care, which includes animal welfare, restraint, and licensing benefits.

County of San Diego news release · Apr 7, 2026

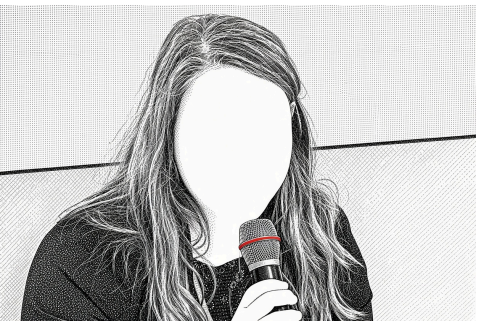


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COUNTY

Building Trust and Teamwork: Inside the Youth Athletic Leadership Academy

For the past year and a half, the San Diego County Probation Department and the San Diego Police Department — including officers from SDPD’s Gang Enforcement Unit — have teamed up to bring sports, mentorship, and leadership opportunities to justice-involved youth. Every month, officers host a Youth Athletic Leadership Academy event at the Youth Transition Campus, where teens volunteer to participate.

Activities rotate — pickleball, volleyball, flag football, soccer, and soon, ping pong — giving many youth the chance to try sports for the first time. Deputy Probation Officer Krista Mae

Ropa said that many participants haven’t had access to organized sports because of limited opportunities or other challenges such as gang involvement. But on the playing field, she notes, those barriers shift.

“Some of these youth come from different neighborhoods and would never interact outside of custody,” Ropa explains. “But during a game, that all disappears. Suddenly, someone they might have seen as a rival becomes a teammate they rely on.”

Ropa says the impact lasts long after the whistle blows. “Even afterward, they ask me, ‘When is the next one?’ They remember the fun and the feeling of being supported. Many of these kids come from troubled backgrounds and don’t always have the same support systems that others do. Giving them a positive experience, even a small one, can shift their thinking.”

The program has also created memorable moments, including a flag football at the San Diego Police Plaza — the former Chargers training facility — where youth played on the original practice field. For many, it was their first time stepping onto a real sports field.

Through shared goals and teamwork, the Youth Athletic Leadership Academy offers something crucial: a new perspective. Youth see officers as coaches and mentors, and they see themselves as capable teammates and leaders. Each event helps build trust, confidence, and connection—skills they can carry with them far beyond their time at the Youth Transition Campus.

County Probation continues its work to help youth grow, heal, and build better futures. For the department, that starts with safety, fairness, and trust for everyone involved.

County of San Diego news release · Apr 3, 2026

DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

COUNTY

Weekend Tijuana River Valley H2S Emissions Exceeded Federal Guideline

People in the South Bay this past weekend, especially those living near the Tijuana River Valley (TJRV), experienced high hydrogen sulfide (H2S) emissions, often recognized by a strong rotten egg smell.

San Diego Air Pollution Control District monitors reported the average hydrogen sulfide emissions in the Tijuana River Valley in the four-hour period between 9 p.m. Sunday and 1 a.m. Monday was 384 parts per billion (ppb), which exceeded the Level 1 Federal Acute Exposure Guideline Level (AEGL) threshold of 360 ppb. The levels were recorded at the Nestor monitor atop Berry Elementary School which is closest to where Saturn Boulevard crosses the river and a drop in elevation creates a small waterfall that can cause the wastewater to foam which in turn can boost emissions.

By 10 a.m. emissions at the Nestor monitor dropped to 5 ppb, below the San Diego Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD) 30 ppb H2S advisory threshold. The H2S emissions are being tracked by the SDAPCD’s network of monitors. The public can sign up to receive email and/or text alerts when emissions surpass 30 parts per billion. Current emission levels and other Tijuana River Valley pollution data are also tracked on the County’s Tijuana River Valley dashboard .

The County continues to work together with SDAPCD and other partners to monitor conditions and update the public the affected South Bay communities.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines exceeding the AEGL Level 1 as an event that will cause “notable discomfort, irritation, or certain asymptomatic non-sensory effects. However, the effects are not disabling and are transient and reversible

upon cessation of exposure.” AEGL Level 2 for the four-hour exposure is more than 55 times higher than these recent elevated levels.

“These ongoing emission exposures to people living in the South Bay are unacceptable,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. “While the County of San Diego and others continue to urge the federal governments on both sides of the border to treat these flows and get them out of the river, there are actions people exposed can take. These include the use of the right indoor filters, such as those the Air Pollution District distributes, and keeping doors and windows shut during the most intense periods. Individuals experiencing a health issue should seek care by their medical provider or if it feels life threatening go to local hospital emergency department.”

Additional recommendations are included in the Community Hydrogen Sulfide Guidance for when levels exceed 30 ppb.

It is unclear why the emission levels rose. The US International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) dashboard reports river levels running at or below recent daily levels. The USIBWC reports that this week is expected to resume operations at the PBCILA pumping plant with the goal of reducing cross-border flows through the Tijuana River.

The USIBWC regularly reports it is in continuous contact with construction and project managers in Mexico and has been working extensively with Mexico to mitigate transboundary flows as much as possible.

A collaborative partnership that includes the USIBWC, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), California Department of Public Health (CDPH), San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board (SDRWQCB), San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (SDAPCD), and the County of San Diego has been working together since 2024 on the

sewage treatment issues, progress updates and health concern guidelines.

The County also continues to coordinate with the Tijuana River Coalition , healthcare providers and community organizations to support affected residents.

“We are committed to supporting the South Bay community,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, M.D., M.P.H., County Public Health Officer. “We will continue to coordinate to expand resources and find long-term solutions to the unacceptable conditions in the Tijuana River Valley.”

People in affected communities can take steps to reduce the impact of the hydrogen sulfide (H2S) by:

Limiting their outdoor activities if odors are bothersome.

Keeping doors and windows closed when odors are present and air out your home or building when odors improve.

Increasing air circulation indoors using fans or air conditioning on recirculation mode.

Running an air purifier with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, activated charcoal and potassium permanganate, is particularly effective for H2S odors.

Signing up to receive a free , high-quality air purifier from SDAPCD.

Those purchasing their own air purifiers can find a verified model with potassium permanganate on the California Air Resources Board (CARB) website and also get more information on a dedicated Tijuana River Valley website created by CARB.

People who are more sensitive to air pollution like those with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), or other chronic lung conditions should keep rescue medication(s) readily available. Anyone with persistent, worrisome, or worsening, symptoms should reach out to their medical care provider or seek emergency care if symptoms feel life-threatening.

More information about the ongoing pollution in the Tijuana River Valley and South County beach water is available from the SDAPCD, IBWC and the County’s dedicated Tijuana River Valley & Beach Water Sewage Crisis webpage.

County of San Diego news release · Apr 6, 2026

COUNTY

County Urges Residents Throw Out Cheddar Cheese Linked to E.coli Outbreak

County Public Health officials are warning people not to eat RAW FARM raw cheddar cheese because it has been linked to a Shiga-toxin producing E.coli outbreak that has made two people in San Diego sick.

On April 2, the company issued a voluntary recall on its raw milk cheddar cheese (original and jalapeno flavored), shredded and block products.

Nine people have gotten sick with Shiga toxin-producing E.coli (STEC) in this outbreak. This includes seven in California and two people in Florida and Texas. Three people have been hospitalized and one person developed hemolytic uremic syndrome (HUS), a serious kidney problem. Over half of the illnesses are in children younger than five years old. Both San Diego residents who got sick are recovering.

County health officials recommend people throw away any RAW FARM raw cheddar cheese products (original and jalapeno flavored) purchased after Jan. 4, 2026. The County is also sharing information about these products with local stores.

“Raw milk products like unpasteurized cheese can carry dangerous bacteria, including Shiga toxin producing E. coli,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, County Public Health Officer. “These infections can cause severe illness, especially in young children, pregnant women, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems.”

Most people with a STEC infection start feeling sick three to four days after eating or drinking something contaminated with the bacteria. Symptoms can start as early as one day or up to 10 days later. A STEC infection can sometimes lead to HUS, requiring hospitalization. Children are at highest risk. HUS can cause permanent kidney damage and is sometimes fatal.

People with these symptoms should contact their healthcare provider.

RAW FARM has been linked to previous outbreaks involving unpasteurized, or “raw,” milk products. The largest raw milk outbreak in U.S. history was identified in San Diego in 2023–24.

County of San Diego news release · Apr 2, 2026

COUNTY

Affordable Housing Helps Family of Six Build a New Life

Residents are settling into their new apartment homes at SkyLINE in Rancho Bernardo, a seven-story affordable housing community located next to the Rancho Bernardo Transit Center.

SkyLINE offers 100 one to three-bedroom homes for individuals and families earning 30% to 50% of the San Diego area median income.

The County contributed \$4 million from its Innovative Housing Trust Fund to help finance the development, which will remain affordable for 70 years.

More information about SkyLINE is available on the Affirmed website . Join the housing interest list . This is one of the newest affordable housing developments supported by County investment .

For residents like Kimberly, a single mother of five, SkyLINE provides stability and the chance to stay rooted in the community where she has raised her children and built a strong support network.

County of San Diego news release · Apr 2, 2026

BUSINESS



Illustration from a photo by Tomás Del Coro from Las Vegas, Nevada, USA · Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 2.0

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight – Navy Region Southwest

Unlock the Navy Market: Your

Next Growth Channel in San Diego

Your business is looking for a competitive edge. We provide it. Navy MWR offers direct marketing access to the highly sought-after military consumer—a loyal demographic with steady purchasing power that is traditionally insulated from conventional advertising. Discover how a strategic partnership with us

gives your brand an inside track.

Drive Brand Preference and a Measurable Return on Investment

This is a performance-based marketing opportunity. Your investment enables direct brand integration and consumer engagement through our diverse portfolio of programs, facilities, and high-visibility events. By

aligning with the trusted Navy MWR brand, you build powerful connections that translate directly into market share and tangible business results.

Connect with our San Diego business development team to review partnership tiers and build your custom marketing plan.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Apr 8, 2026

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

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).

Continued on page 3

BUSINESS (CONTINUED)

San Diego commerce & the regional economy

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Chamber Joins State Coalitions

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

AROUND CALIFORNIA

Statewide news

CALIFORNIA

Newsom Sends Another \$145 Million to Local Governments for Homelessness Programs

The latest round of grants brings total state spending on homelessness since 2019 to more than \$37 billion.

SACRAMENTO — Governor Gavin Newsom’s administration is distributing an additional \$145.4 million in taxpayer funds to counties battling homelessness, the latest infusion into programs that have already consumed more than \$37 billion since 2019.

The money, awarded through the Homeless Housing, Assistance and Prevention grants, will go to local governments in Lake, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, Santa Clara, Solano, Yolo and Yuba counties, according to the announcement Wednesday.

Newsom stated that the funding is intended “to drive forward our progress reducing homelessness.” He added that the state is “seeing real results in real time — and we’re not taking our foot off the gas.”

The governor has claimed the state has transitioned more than 100,000 Californians out of homelessness. Official counts continue to show between 180,000 and 187,000 people experiencing homelessness statewide.

That figure represents roughly one-quarter to nearly one-third of the nation’s total homeless population, although California accounts for only about 12 percent of U.S. residents.

In Los Angeles County, the 2025 count identified 72,308

homeless individuals, including 43,699 within the city of Los Angeles. San Francisco’s 2024 Point-in-Time Count recorded 8,323 people experiencing homelessness, more than 4,300 of them unsheltered.

Combined Point-in-Time counts for the eight counties receiving the new grants show more than 28,000 to 30,000 people experiencing homelessness in those jurisdictions.

Dividing the \$145.4 million by roughly 30,000 homeless individuals in the targeted counties equals approximately \$4,847 per person in this single allocation.

When added to the estimated \$37 billion spent on homelessness programs since 2019, the cumulative total exceeds \$37.145 billion. Spread across the statewide homeless population, that equates to between \$198,636 and \$206,361 per person.

Previous reporting by the California Globe has highlighted issues with the initiatives. An audit of the Project Homekey program found that \$745 million spent in Los Angeles resulted in many facilities sitting vacant while street encampments remained.

The governor’s 2026 budget proposal called for creating additional homelessness agencies and increasing spending further, despite the massive prior outlays.

State Auditor reports have identified multiple agencies involved in homelessness and housing programs as “high-risk” for waste, fraud and abuse. Federal prosecutors have filed charges in several cases tied to misuse of Newsom-era homelessness

funds.

Contracted nonprofits have faced accusations of diverting public dollars for personal luxuries and unrelated expenses.

Encampments and related concerns continue to affect streets across major cities, including San Francisco and Los Angeles.

The fresh allocation arrives as the California Globe continues monitoring how these funds are used and their impact on reducing homelessness.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Apr 8, 2026

CALIFORNIA

State Controller Official Admits Audits Not Getting Done, Acknowledges Fraud Is Rampant

An undercover video shows a communications official saying the office cannot carry out its auditing duties due to staffing cuts while noting the prevalence of fraud in state programs.

SACRAMENTO — A communications official in the California State Controller’s Office told an undercover journalist that the agency “just can’t conduct the audits” due to repeated staffing cuts.

Bismarck Obando, who serves as acting deputy controller for public affairs and press secretary to Controller Malia Cohen, spoke with a journalist affiliated with independent journalist James O’Keefe and the O’Keefe Media Group.

Obando said the auditing teams had faced ongoing reductions in support and that state agencies were resistant to oversight visits.

The comments were made at a time when local governments are seeking an additional \$1 billion for homelessness programs this year. Obando told the journalist there is no statewide plan on homelessness.

The Controller’s Office is responsible for reviewing how state money is spent, looking into misuse and improper use of funds, and confirming that payments are made correctly before they are issued. It is described as having a unique level of autonomy in these roles.

Cohen has failed to meet deadlines for the federal Single Audit and the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report in each year since she began in 2023. Those missed deadlines have prompted worries that large amounts of federal support for areas such as housing, health care and homelessness services might be held up or put at risk.

The state’s total exposure to fraud, waste and improper payments in recent years is about \$435 billion. That figure is close to the full gross domestic product of Colombia and equals roughly 1.42 percent of the overall U.S. economy.

The same undercover effort looked at two large nonprofit organizations in South Los Angeles that obtain tens of millions of dollars from public sources. Abundant Blessings Incorporated received a \$23 million award and later saw fraud charges brought against its executive director, Alexander Soofer; the site was discovered to be empty.

Urban Alchemy has obtained contracts worth more than \$60 million, among

them over \$12 million channeled through LAHSA. Observers found minimal ongoing activity there, and people experiencing homelessness said they often lacked everyday items such as blankets and socks.

This work follows earlier undercover projects by O’Keefe Media Group that uncovered schemes offering cash in exchange for ballots among homeless people on Los Angeles’ Skid Row.

The Controller’s Office has come under fire for not taking stronger steps against fraud in the hospice sector. Hundreds of providers have been identified in connection with more than \$105 million in improper billings, including cases involving nonexistent locations that led to federal probes and detentions.

Herb Morgan, a candidate seeking to succeed Cohen, said the current leadership has permitted the state’s large-scale fraud issues to grow unchecked. He added that vast sums have disappeared without the aggressive reviews that taxpayers expect from the office.

Federal authorities are actively investigating fraud networks tied to hospice services, homelessness funding and additional fields. The Controller’s Office has stated that its audits since January 2015 have uncovered more than \$10 billion in waste, abuse and poor financial practices.

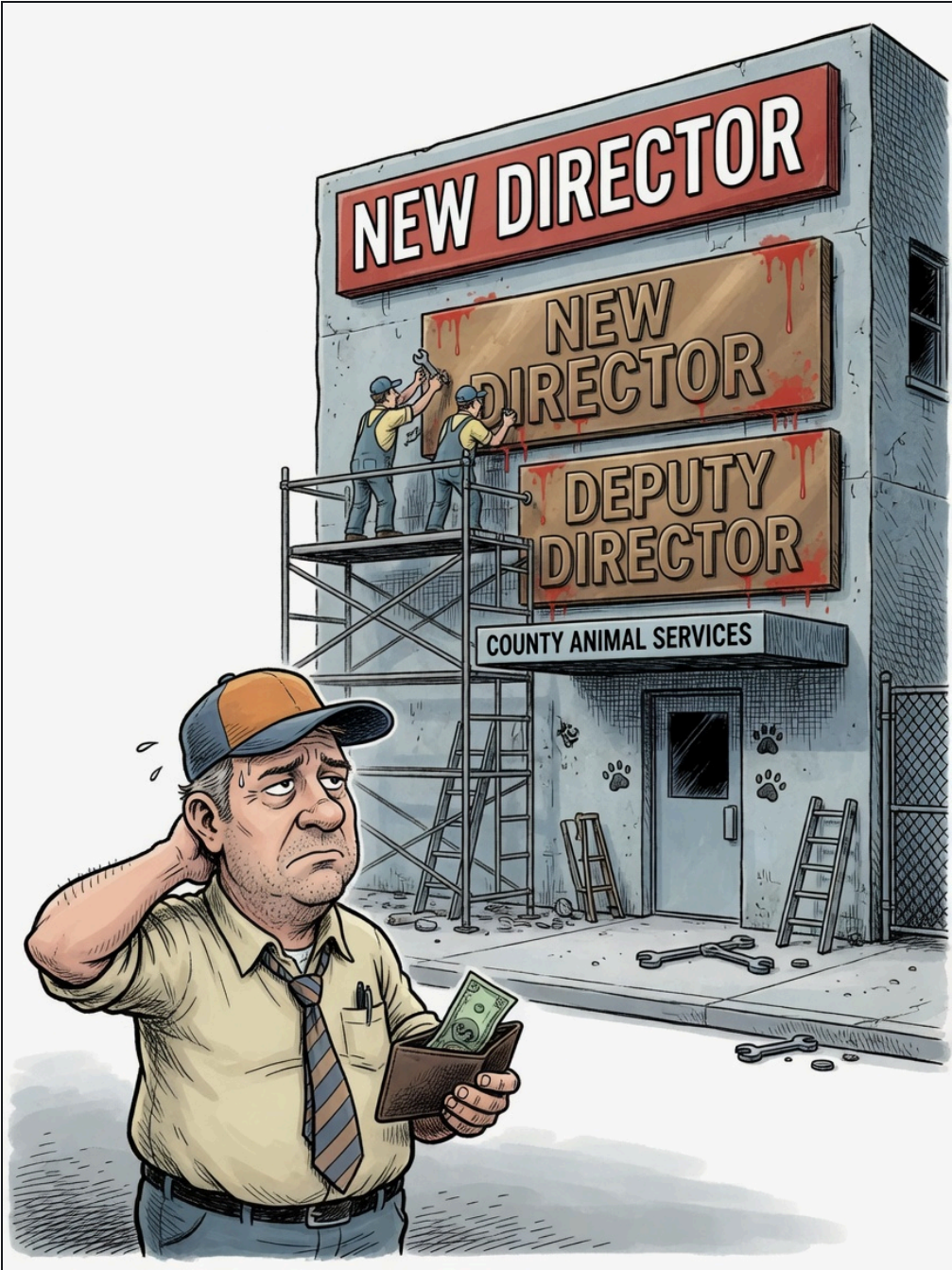
The California Globe indicated it would keep tracking state spending, referring to California as the fraud capital of America.

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · Apr 7, 2026

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THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

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 sandiegonewsline.com.	
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MORE NEWS

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY County Launches Pop Up Budget Events to Hear from Residents The County held an unscheduled, surprise “pop-up” budget event Thursday at the North Inland Family Resource Center in Escondido, giving residents a quick, accessible way to learn about the County budget and share what matters most to them. The goal: meet people where they are and make it easier for residents to have their say in this year’s budget process. County officials are developing a balanced 2026-27 budget for the Board of Supervisors to consider in June; the current budget is \$8.63 billion.	At the pop-up, staff brought flyers, a hands-on activity where people could “spend” faux dollars on their top priorities and information about how to take part in the budget process. The unannounced, two-and-a-half-hour event was held in the County’s Fifth Supervisorial District. Similar pop-ups will be held in each of the other four districts in the coming weeks. The pop-ups are part of broader efforts to expand public involvement. County Chief Administrative Officer Ebony Shelton has noted that this year’s budget comes with added challenges, including slowed revenue growth, rising costs and uncertainty about state and federal	funding, which accounts for nearly half the County’s revenue. This winter, the County held a public Budget Process meeting, delivered updates to the Board in February and March, and hosted an online survey and budget priorities ranking tool on the County’s Engage San Diego County Budget page from Feb. 25 to March 29. Residents shared what they wanted to know about the budget and how they preferred to receive updates and ranked six major County spending areas. Shelton will release the recommended budget for the public and County Board of Supervisors to review and consider on May 18. Once available, the public can:	Submit comments through 5 p.m. June 11 on Engage San Diego County. Attend a virtual community meeting from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m., Wednesday, May 27 Visit an in-person open house from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., Thursday, May 28 at the County Operations Center. Participate in the public budget hearings starting June 1, before the Board considers and adopts the final budget June 23. San Diego County provides programs and services that touch the lives of nearly all of the county’s 3.3 million residents — across the unincorporated areas, the 18 incorporated cities and the 18 federally recognized tribes.	In the unincorporated areas, the County provides services similar to city government, like law enforcement roads, building permits, animal services, parks and libraries. Regionwide, the County also delivers emergency preparedness, criminal prosecution and detention facilities, public and behavioral health services, food and restaurant inspections, elections, beach water monitoring, and federal and state social service programs such as food and financial assistance. To learn more, go to the County’s budget website . County of San Diego news release · Apr 3, 2026
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SAN DIEGO NEWSLINE

The news, every day.

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