

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

San Diego County: Early Voting Options for June Gubernatorial Primary



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With less than two weeks to vote in the June 2 Gubernatorial Primary Election, the Registrar of Voters is reminding San Diego County voters that there are many options to vote beyond voting on Election Day. More than 1.8 million reminder postcards were mailed to voters who had not voted as of May 14, encouraging participation in the June primary.

Early voting helps ensure ballots can be processed quickly and included in the first release of election night results. Voters are encouraged to vote as soon as possible to avoid long lines on Election Day.

All active registered voters have received a ballot in the mail.

To return a ballot by mail or at an official ballot drop box, voters should:

Seal the ballot in the postage-paid return envelope.

Date and sign the envelope — your signature is required for your ballot to count.

Return the ballot by mail or drop it off at any official San Diego County ballot drop box.

Mailed ballots must be postmarked on or before June 2 and received within seven days. Ballots returned at official drop boxes or vote centers must be dropped off by 8 p.m. on Election Day. Voters using the U.S. Postal Service can sign up for ballot tracking to follow their ballot through the process.

Voters who prefer to vote in person can visit any vote center. Select vote centers will be open daily

from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. starting Saturday, May 23. A map of vote center locations is available on the Registrar's website.

Beginning May 30, all vote centers will be open daily, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. On June 2 — the final day of voting — all vote centers, official ballot drop boxes and the Registrar's office are open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

To save time at the vote center, review your voter information pamphlet ahead of time and mark your selections on the sample ballot. You may bring it with you to help transfer your choices to your official ballot.

For more information on your voting options, visit sdvote.com or call 858-565-5800 or 800-696-0136 .

County of San Diego news release · May 20, 2026

COUNTY

County Releases \$9.1 Billion Recommended Budget Focused on Stability, Essential Services and Community Needs

Editor's Note: A correction has been made to this point in Vulnerable Populations: Health and Medical Care in Jails — \$198.9 million (+\$17.9 million) , the description previously read: "Supports medical care for adults in custody and service increases related to Proposition 36." To clarify, while some funds for Proposition 36 are included, the majority of the increase supports broader service needs. The corrected description is: "Supports medical care for adults in custody and service increases."

The County of San Diego released its recommended budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27 , a spending plan totaling more than \$9.1 billion. The plan reflects a 6%

increase from the current year budget and aims to maintain stability while investing in essential services and responding to growing community needs.

Collaboration, Core Services and Community Needs

The values-centered proposed budget was shaped through close collaboration among community members, the Board of Supervisors and its ad hoc subcommittees. The process focused on strengthening core services and responding to public needs.

The plan augments public safety to meet the added responsibilities of Proposition 36 and supports health and safety-net services impacted by federal policy changes of H.R. 1. It expands behavioral health care and continues critical investments in homelessness response, public health and infrastructure while also maintaining vital community services like libraries and parks. The budget also dedicates resources to addressing the pollution crisis in the Tijuana River Valley. See additional highlights below.

Balancing the FY 2026-27 budget required thoughtful and strategic choices due to uncertain state and federal revenues, which account for nearly half of all the County's funding. Growth in local revenue streams have not kept pace with the overall growth in the cost of doing business, prompting the County to leverage recalibration strategies.

To recalibrate and prepare for the challenges ahead, the proposed budget reflects new efficiencies by reducing costs, shrinking the County's facilities footprint, and shifting staff to address evolving responsibilities while avoiding layoffs.

The recommended budget includes 20,388 staff positions, a net increase of 108. Growth is primarily driven by Consumer Protection, Proposition 36 implementation, and H.R. 1 response, and is offset by unfilled vacancies,

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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County Releases \$9.1 Billion Recommended Budget Focused on Stability, Essential Services and Community Needs

consolidation, and attrition.

Community input played a key role in shaping the recommended budget through surveys, focus groups, emails, calls and more. Now that the recommended budget is 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 a public budget hearing on June 1.

The Board of Supervisors is scheduled to consider and adopt the new budget June 23. Get more details about the proposed budget.

The County delivers programs and services that reach nearly all of the county's 3.3 million residents across the unincorporated areas, the 18 incorporated cities and 18 federally recognized tribes.

In the unincorporated area, County government provides day-to-day services a city government typically provides, including law enforcement, roads, building permits, animal services, parks and libraries. Some cities also contract with the County for these services.

Regionwide, the County also oversees emergency preparedness, criminal prosecution and detention, food and financial assistance programs, behavioral health services, public health programs, restaurant inspections, elections and beach water monitoring.

Highlights from the New Recommended Budget

Housing Interventions – \$88 million Provides a full continuum of housing to ensure people are sheltered while receiving treatment and support services. This includes a Flexible Housing Pool pilot as part of the new Transitional Rent benefit that will strengthen long-term housing stability.

Residential & Long-Term Care – \$176 million Provides behavioral health treatment and 24-hour support in a structured, therapeutic setting for people needing a higher level of care.

BH CONNECT Implementation —Adding \$47.3 million Expands community-based behavioral

health care through evidence-based programs that support children and adults with complex conditions.

Substance Use Treatment for Adults — Adding \$23 million Enhances the network of substance use services and supports, including narcotic treatment programs and a new chemical dependency recovery program.

Behavioral Health Workforce — \$15.2 million Supports development and retention of a skilled public behavioral health workforce through the ELEVATE Fund and training and technical assistance for small, diverse community-based organizations.

Community Engagement and Network Support — \$14.4 million Strengthens community engagement and supports providers through technical assistance, ensuring meaningful involvement of all 29 state-identified stakeholder groups (BHSA) in shaping behavioral health work in the region.

Behavioral Health Wellness Campus — Adding \$12.7 million Supports the design and development of the new integrated campus on County-owned property that will offer a continuum of mental health and substance use treatment and supportive services. The County was awarded a \$99.5 million state behavioral health grant for this project in March 2026.

Crisis Residential Treatment — Adding \$9.6 million Increases capacity within community-based crisis care settings that offer step down care along with diversion from unnecessary hospitalization.

Behavioral Health Facilities — Adding \$3.5 million Supports facility improvements to develop new Children's Crisis Residential Care and Substance Use Recovery Treatment Services programs funded through State grant funds.

Child & Youth Behavioral Health — Adding \$2 million Prioritizes early intervention, outpatient, residential treatment, and crisis stabilization care to ensure children and youth have access to care.

In-Home Outreach Teams — Adding \$1.1 million Connects people with serious mental illness who haven't engaged in services to care.

Regional Watershed Protection & Ocean Pollution Prevention — \$25.6 million Supports watershed protection efforts that reduce ocean pollution and promote clean beaches, healthy ecosystems and safe drinking water.

Waste Diversion, Emissions Reduction & Closed Landfill

Management — \$25 million Integrates programs that divert waste from landfills and reduce greenhouse gas emissions with long-term monitoring and management of closed landfills to protect air and groundwater quality and strengthen regional environmental safeguards.

Farmland Preservation, Open Space Protection & Agricultural Safeguards — \$17.3 million Protects the region's agricultural economy and natural landscapes by permanently preserving farmland, expanding protection of open space and enhancing efforts to detect and prevent invasive pests that threaten crops and local ecosystems.

Climate Action Plan-related Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Reduction Investments — \$15 million (includes some programs referenced in other areas of the budget) Implementation of the County's Climate Action Plan measures that cut GHG emissions, improve air quality and strengthen long-term climate resilience.

Groundwater Resource Management — \$3.4 million Supports long-term groundwater management and protects regional water security.

Green Building & Solar Energy Promotion — \$1.4 million Promotes green building practices and accelerates solar energy adoption throughout the region.

EV Roadmap Expansion & Fleet Electrification — \$1.2 million Advances the County's EV Roadmap by replacing fleet vehicles with electric vehicles and installing new charging stations at sites including Campo RMS, Julian RMS, Pine Valley Park, Tijuana River Valley Regional Park, El Monte Park and Lake Morena Park.

Tree Planting — \$500,000 Plants 1,000 new trees to improve air quality, expand shade coverage and support healthier neighborhoods. In addition to planting trees on County properties in support of our climate action goals, our private property tree program gives unincorporated area private property owners or their designees free 15-gallon trees to plant themselves.

Pollution Chief for Tijuana River Valley Regional Coordination A new Pollution Chief to lead regional collaboration, identify resources and drive long-term solutions for the Tijuana River Valley.

\$93.1 million in housing resources for vulnerable residents Supports the development of affordable and supportive housing, rental assistance and services that help families achieve

self-sufficiency. Including: \$16 million total, including \$11.6 million prior year funds, for the Regional Homeless Assistance Program and Inclement Weather Program . Provides safe, short-term housing through hotel placements and supplies hotel/motel vouchers during cold or wet weather for residents of unincorporated communities needing emergency shelter.

\$3.4 million for the Housing our Youth Program Continues dedicated housing and supportive services for youth ages 18–24, connecting hundreds of young adults to stability and long-term well-being.

\$2.8 million in prior year funds for the Shallow Rental Subsidy Program Launches a new round of support for 200 senior households, offering a \$500 monthly subsidy for 18 months to prevent homelessness and support housing retention.

\$1.6 million in prior year funds to extend the LGBTQ+ Innovative Housing Program Continues case management, supportive services, and housing navigation for LGBTQ+ individuals experiencing homelessness.

\$1.6 million in prior year funds for the Bancroft and Magnolia Safe Parking Programs Operates 43 safe parking spaces with onsite services to support individuals living in vehicles as they transition to permanent housing.

\$29.2 million for housing support and development services Funds sustainable housing development, affordability programs, ADU and tiny home initiatives, homelessness cleanup and assistance, inspections, and streamlined land use review.

\$600,000 for the District Attorney's Shelter Ready app Enhances real time transparency by supporting an innovative tool that connects people experiencing homelessness with emergency shelter and safe parking programs.

Road Safety and Maintenance Investments — \$265.9 million Funds enhancements such as new traffic signals, curb ramps, pedestrian crossings, guardrails and supports maintenance of 2,000 miles of County roads in unincorporated communities to ensure safe, reliable travel.

Facility Maintenance and Safety Upgrades—\$73.3 million Funds critical repairs, facility maintenance and major safety upgrades across County facilities, including:

Repairs at San Diego Central Jail, new cameras at George F. Bailey Detention Facility and East Mesa

Reentry Facility, and improvements at Rock Mountain Detention Facility.

HVAC and roof upgrades at the County Emergency Operations Center, along with HVAC improvements at the San Marcos Offices and Edgemoor Skilled Nursing Facility.

Installation of electric vehicle charging infrastructure across the County.

Maintains safe, clean park and library facilities through ongoing maintenance, repairs and weed management.

Stormwater and Flood Prevention — \$61.7 million Supports storm flood prevention through maintenance of culverts, channels, and storm drains, and funds the operation and maintenance of the County's sewer system and water districts.

Parks & Recreation Operations — \$37.7 million Operates 159 park facilities, 60,000 acres of parkland and 39 8 miles of trails for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Ramona Sheriff Station Replacement—\$34.3 million Builds a new Ramona Sheriff Station to replace the existing facility constructed in the 1970s, enhancing public safety services in the region.

Library Operations — \$71.5 million The County Library system operates 33 branch libraries, four electric outreach vans and five automated book kiosks. This budget maintains hours of operation to ensure access to materials, programs and other resources. In 2025, the system circulated 11.79 million items, ranking among largest library systems in California, the nation and the world.

Vista Detention Facility Planning —\$3 million Begins planning, environmental review and design for a new Vista Detention Facility to meet long-term operational needs.

Community Facility Investments Continues investments in new and upgraded facilities that serve communities, including the Casa de Oro Library — opening summer 2026 with double the space — and the Epicentre in Mira Mesa, reopening as a County operated community and teen center shaped through extensive community engagement.

Firefighting Operations and Emergency Medical Services — \$84.5 million Strengthens firefighting and emergency medical services in unincorporated areas, including added staffing for water tender trucks that deliver large volume water to fire scenes.

County Fire Night Flying Helicopter Expected to be

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY (CONTINUED)

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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County Releases \$9.1 Billion Recommended Budget Focused on Stability, Essential Services and Community Needs

ready to serve in FY 2026-27, it represents a major regional investment that expands critical nighttime wildfire and emergency response capability.

Citizen’s Law Enforcement Review Board (CLERB)—\$600,000 Supports CLERB’s expanded oversight role, including outreach, policy development, investigations and specialized medical case expertise.

Community Care Coordination and Alternatives to Incarceration — \$5.5 million Connects justice involved people with significant health and behavioral health needs to housing, treatment, medical care, education and employment.

Justice Prevention, Diversion and Reentry Services — \$4.5 million Bolsters prevention, diversion and reentry support, including the newly implemented Resource and Reentry Hub where individuals can access case management, peer support, treatment, healthcare and tailored assistance following jail, arrest or law enforcement contact.

Expanding Community-Led Violence Prevention in Spring Valley — \$250,000 Supports implementation of the No Shots Fired program through outreach, mentorship and wraparound services aimed at reducing gang and gun violence using a community-driven, prevention-focused approach.

Gun Violence Reduction Program — \$227,000 Supports a public health-aligned approach to reducing suicide, domestic violence and community violence through early intervention, improved crisis response and collaboration between public health, law enforcement and community partners.

Eligibility and Self Sufficiency Services — \$852 million Supports CalFresh, CalWORKs, Medi-Cal and General Relief, including \$23.7 million tied to the local revenue impact of federal H.R. 1 CalFresh administrative requirements and related staffing to help residents keep their benefits.

Child and Family Well-Being — \$502 million Invests in family strengthening, prevention and child protection services, with over \$163 million dedicated to foster and adoptive families.

In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) — \$248.7 million Includes \$25.2 million in new funding to support roughly 50,000 vulnerable adults and people with disabilities with home and personal care assistance.

Health and Medical Care in Jails — \$198.9 million Supports medical care for adults in custody.

Health and Medical Care for Youth in Custody — \$14.36 million Maintains and enhances health and medical care services for youth in custody.

Animal Services — \$12.2 million Funds enforcement, sheltering and veterinary care in unincorporated areas and adoption services countywide.

Immigrant Legal Defense Program — \$13.2 million Provides legal representation to detained immigrants and unaccompanied minors in removal proceedings. This represents \$5.5 million in one-time funding and \$7.7 in ongoing funding, which is an increase of \$2.7 million over last year.

Sheriff’s Office (Proposition 36) — \$15.3 million Includes adding 23 full-time employees to support increased jail bookings and related operational needs.

Public Defender (Proposition 36) — \$4.82 million Includes adding 18 full-time employees to meet higher caseloads and ensure timely, constitutionally required legal representation for people who cannot afford

an attorney.

Probation (Proposition 36) — \$2.97 million Includes adding 15 full-time employees to expand pretrial and felony supervision and support increased assessment, treatment and housing needs.

Library Wi-Fi Access — \$381,000 Provides free, 24/7 Wi-Fi at County library locations.

Library High School Program — \$245,000 Continues the program that helps adults earn their high school diplomas.

Citizenship Training — \$221,000 Offers training through County Library to support County residents pursuing citizenship.

Child Support Services Supports financial, emotional and physical wellbeing of nearly 39,900 families across the region.

Public Health Services — \$235.6 million Protects community health through epidemic prevention, disease control, public health centers, home visiting programs and pharmaceutical services that ensure broad access to care.

Food Safety Inspections — \$18 million Safeguards public health by inspecting 15,700 restaurants, food trucks and other food facilities, supporting 530 temporary events and conducting 1,200 complaint investigations and 520 food-borne illness investigations.

District Attorney Consumer Protection Expansion — \$16.3 million Expands countywide consumer protection activities to investigate and evaluate reports of fraudulent and unfair business practices and take appropriate action to protect the public.

Consumer Fairness and Public Protection Unit — \$2.4 million Establishes a new eight-person team in County Counsel focused on consumer protection, product safety, financial abuse, unfair competition, environmental justice and economic fairness, broadening efforts to protect consumers in coordination with other

enforcement agencies, such as the San Diego County District Attorney and City Attorneys.

Vector Control and Mosquito-Borne Disease Prevention — \$16 million Monitors and treats more than 1,600 mosquito breeding sites to protect residents from West Nile virus and other mosquito-borne illnesses.

Beach Water Quality Testing — \$1.9 million Delivers same day beach water quality testing and public reporting at 45 locations, helping residents stay informed and safe.

Ethics, Compliance & Labor Standards — \$300,000 Adds the equivalent of two full-time positions to enhance labor standards enforcement, strengthen safety in County parks, and improve contract compliance efforts.

Mobile Veterinary Surgical Unit Brings spay/neuter services and basic pet wellness directly to underserved and high need communities in the unincorporated areas, improving animal health and accessibility for families.

Arts & Culture and Film Office — \$3.25 million Investment in arts and culture initiatives and support the implementation of a film office.

County of San Diego news release · May 18, 2026

COUNTY
San Diego County: Register to Vote by May 18 for June Gubernatorial Primary

San Diego County residents must register to vote by Monday, May 18 to get a mail ballot for the June 2 Gubernatorial Primary Election .

If voters miss this deadline, they can conditionally register and vote provisionally at the Registrar of Voters office in Kearny Mesa at 5600 Overland Ave., San Diego, Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Conditional registration will also be available at any vote center starting Saturday, May 23 through the final day of voting, June 2.

Registering is quick and easy and can be completed online . Voters may also request a paper form by calling 800-696-0136 or emailing rovmail@sdcounty.ca.gov .

Voting materials are available in English, Spanish, Filipino, Vietnamese and Chinese.

Residents can register to vote if they are:

At least 18 years old on or before Election Day

Not currently in state or federal prison for a felony conviction

Not declared mentally incompetent by a court

Voters can check their registration status online and should re-register if they have moved, changed their name or are new to San Diego County.

Every registered voter will receive a ballot in the mail. After marking their selections, voters should:

Seal the ballot in the postage-paid return envelope.

Date and sign the envelope. Voter signature is required for their vote to count.

Return the ballot by mail or drop it off at any of the Registrar’s official ballot drop boxes .

Mailed ballots must be postmarked on or before June 2 and received by the Registrar of Voters no later than seven days. Ballots returned at official drop boxes or vote centers must be dropped off by 8 p.m. on June 2, the final day of voting.

Voters using the U.S. Postal Service can sign up for ballot tracking.

Early in-person voting is available at the Registrar of Voters office. Select vote centers open May 23, with all locations open daily beginning May 30. On June 2, all sites will be open 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Voters planning to vote in person are encouraged to review their voter information pamphlet and mark the sample ballot ahead of time to help reduce delays.

County of San Diego news release · May 15, 2026

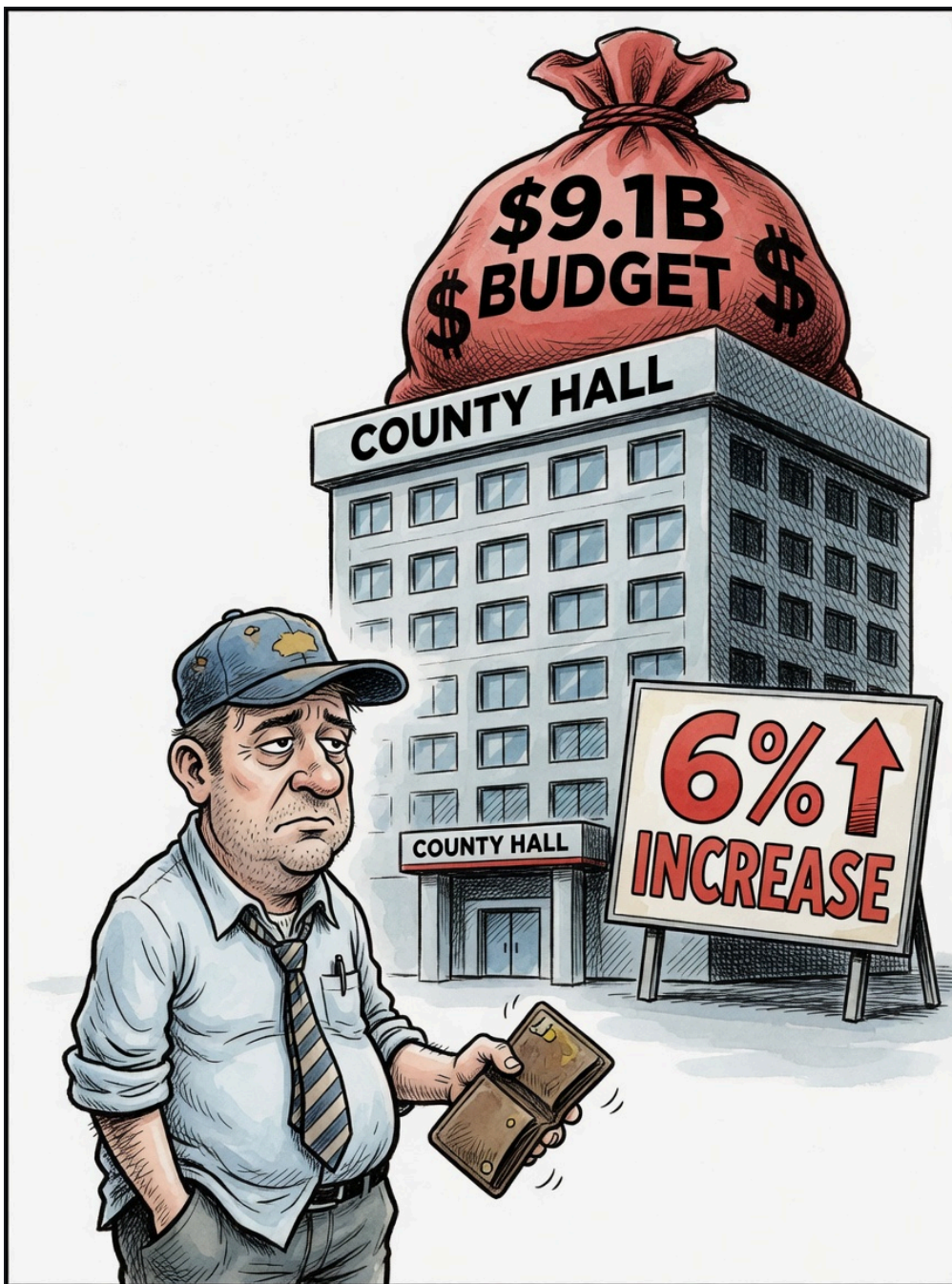
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THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion

*Stability for them, empty wallet for us*

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

COMMENTARY

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

COMMENTARY

Moorlach Warns of Unsustainable Spending as Newsom's Budget Faces Structural Deficits

California Policy Center senior fellow John Moorlach says Gov. Gavin Newsom's decision to launch new programs and forgo paying down debt during years of surpluses has produced structural deficits and more than \$100 billion in annual spending growth that the Legislative Analyst deems unsustainable.

SACRAMENTO — With Gov. Gavin Newsom's revised state budget due by law on May 14, California faces a difficult path to a June 15 agreement, according to John Moorlach.

Moorlach, a senior fellow and director of the Center for Public Accountability at the California Policy Center, argues that Newsom's two mistakes during surplus years—starting new programs and failing to pay down or retire existing debts—have produced structural deficits of \$20 billion to \$30 billion annually.

In an analysis published April 28 by Legislative Analyst Gabriel Petek, the

nonpartisan office delivered a sobering assessment, Moorlach writes.

The report shows that when surpluses arrived, Newsom chose to launch new programs and avoided paying down or eliminating existing obligations. Moorlach compares the approach to a household that receives a bonus and immediately takes on expensive new car payments instead of reducing credit card debt or building savings.

As a result, annual state spending has risen by more than \$100 billion and programs have increased by 43 percent, according to the former state senator.

Moorlach notes that California's ranking in financial condition has fallen. Audited statements for 2023 placed the state 44th in the nation, down from 41st when Newsom assumed office in 2018.

Petek's analysis attributes nearly two-thirds of the growth in local assistance spending to automatic increases needed to sustain current service levels, which Moorlach ties to public employee salary and benefit hikes.

The breakdown continues with discretionary decisions to maintain current services at 15 percent, new or expanded services at about 20 percent, and outside factors such as federal policy or voter measures accounting for less than 5 percent, according to the report cited by Moorlach.

The California Policy Center fellow says Petek's conclusion is blunt: the state's spending commitments and revenues are “not sustainable,” and “difficult decisions” lie ahead. Moorlach likens the situation to the Titanic's warning of an iceberg dead ahead.

Moorlach, who served on the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee and the Joint Budget Committee while in the Legislature from 2015 to 2020, draws on his background as a certified public accountant, certified financial planner, Orange County treasurer-tax collector and supervisor.

He recalls working with Petek years earlier at Standard & Poor's and praises the analyst's consistent objectivity even when delivering unwelcome news.

The former lawmaker expresses little confidence that

the current supermajority Legislature, which he describes as influenced by public employee unions, will make meaningful spending cuts. He points to Newsom withholding nearly \$4 billion in Proposition 98 school funding as a budget gimmick that creates additional debt.

Moorlach predicts unions will instead push for higher taxes. Because the state relies heavily on volatile income taxes and many high earners have already left, he warns that the middle class will ultimately bear the burden.

He suggests the mediocrity of candidates in the June gubernatorial primary reflects qualified potential candidates' reluctance to inherit a turnaround situation under what he calls an incompetent supermajority legislature controlled by public employee union interests.

The Legislative Analyst's core recommendation, according to Moorlach, is that “these deficits will likely require at least some – if not significant – spending reductions.”

While the coming weeks may entertain fiscal analysts, Moorlach holds little hope that the Legislature will absorb the Legislative Analyst's

warning. He says only if the public employee unions that shape legislative decisions recognize the need for a change in direction will the next governor avoid inheriting a severe budget crisis.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · May 15, 2026

COMMENTARY

California Falls Short on Local Government Financial Transparency, Policy Expert Says

Marc Joffe of the California Policy Center argues that the state's weak rules for audited financial reports leave taxpayers in the dark while other states set strong standards.

Taxpayers deserve clear visibility into how their funds are handled by local governments, according to Marc Joffe of the California Policy Center.

Joffe outlines three essential elements for an effective system of local government financial reporting. These include mandating annual independent audits for all entities above a certain revenue level, imposing strict deadlines backed by meaningful

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COMMENTARY (CONTINUED)

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

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California Falls Short on Local Government Financial Transparency, Policy Expert Says

consequences without easy exemptions, and ensuring reports are available through a single online database that anyone can search without special requests.

Audited statements serve as an important alert for potential problems, Joffe writes. Research by John Moorlach at the Center for Public Accountability shows that localities in the poorest fiscal shape tend to delay releasing their numbers. Failure to disclose records promptly can itself indicate deeper troubles, he adds.

Utah and Florida provide models worth following, Joffe argues. Utah law requires audits for any local government handling more than \$1 million per year and allows the state auditor to withhold funding from those that miss

deadlines. The Transparent Utah site makes data from roughly 1,000 entities available, with freely downloadable audit reports.

Florida statutes demand that counties and cities exceeding \$250,000 in revenues or spending finish audits within nine months after the fiscal year closes. The state auditor general offers a searchable online collection of all such reports by government type and year.

Texas has made notable strides recently, Joffe notes. Although it previously required audits, enforcement was lacking until Senate Bill 1851 took effect on September 1, 2025. Municipalities that miss the 180-day deadline cannot raise taxes above the no-new-revenue level until they comply. Citizens may file complaints with the attorney general to spark reviews, leading to an investigation of nearly 1,000 cities announced in December.

Joffe acknowledges that Texas still needs a centralized

repository for reports and that the new rules cover only cities, not counties or special districts. Even so, its 180-day timeline stands out, especially since federal rules allow grantees nine months.

By comparison, California's approach falls well short, Joffe contends. Instead of requiring audited statements, the state collects unaudited financial transaction reports from cities and counties. Audited materials received in limited cases stay internal and are not published online. Residents must hunt for reports on individual agency sites or submit formal record requests.

Noncompliance remains widespread, according to Joffe. The California Policy Center's Local Fiscal Health Dashboard, introduced in late 2024, revealed that 56 of California's 482 cities had not submitted their fiscal year 2023 audited statements. Of those, 26 were seeking voter approval for tax hikes or bonds amounting to \$534.6

million.

Extreme delays persist in some places. As of late 2025, Fort Jones in Siskiyou County had yet to release its fiscal year 2019 report, more than six years late, and its auditor had issued a disclaimer of opinion, Joffe reports. Researchers also reported that San Joaquin in Fresno County had not posted its fiscal year 2020 document and failed to respond to inquiries.

State Senator Steven Choi has introduced measures to improve matters. Senate Bill 595, signed in October 2025, sets a 10-month deadline and imposes personal fines of \$1,000 to \$5,000 on finance officers. However, Joffe notes that lawmakers removed language about shifting to machine-readable audited reports and added a waiver for penalties upon "a satisfactory showing of good cause," which the Center calls an "undefined standard" that undermines the law.

Senate Bill 1126 would require agencies to post

completed audits on their own websites within 30 days. While helpful, Joffe says it does not create the unified statewide searchable portal offered in Utah and Florida.

Overall, California lacks a broad audit requirement, penalties without loopholes, and a central public database, Joffe concludes. Until these shortcomings are fixed, the state will continue trailing transparency leaders, a situation that Marc Joffe, a visiting fellow at the Center, finds embarrassing for a global technology hub.

San Diego Newsline · Based on commentary published by the California Policy Center · May 18, 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.

MORE NEWS

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY

County Offices Will Close for Memorial Day

San Diego County offices will be closed on Monday, May 25, in observance of Memorial Day. The closure includes all County public health clinics, family resource centers, library branches and animal shelters.

Essential services, including law enforcement and emergency animal control response, will continue without interruption throughout the holiday.

County parks, campgrounds and neighborhood day-use parks will remain open as they do every day of the year. However, several community facilities will be closed on Monday, May 25. These include:

Spring Valley Gymnasium
4S Ranch Recreation Office (all parks remain open)

Camping reservations may still be made at the County Department of Parks and

Recreation Online Camping Reservations webpage . The reservation phone line, however, will not be staffed on Memorial Day.

All County offices and facilities will resume normal business hours on Tuesday, May 26.

County of San Diego news release · May 20, 2026

COUNTY

CalFresh Work or Volunteer Requirements Begin June 1

New federal rules taking effect June 1, 2026 mean that some San Diego County residents who receive CalFresh food benefits will need to meet work or volunteer requirements to get or keep CalFresh food benefits.

The County is urging affected residents to update their contact information in their BenefitsCal portal, check renewal dates, and respond when contacted by the County. People can call the Access Customer Service Call

Center at 1-866-262-9881 with any eligibility questions.

The updated federal rules apply to certain Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) who are applying for or renewing CalFresh benefits and who:

Are physically and mentally able to work

Affected residents must show they meet work or volunteer requirements when they apply or complete their annual recertification for CalFresh unless they qualify for an exemption.

Those subject to the new able-bodied rules may receive only three months of benefits in a three-year period unless they fulfill work or volunteer requirements or qualify for an exemption. Importantly, these rules apply only to the individuals affected, not to the entire household.

Individuals subject to ABAWD rules must complete at least 20 hours per week, or 80 hours per month, of one of

the following:

Work activities, like a job or self-employment

Job training including the CalFresh Employment & Training (CFET) program

County staff can help residents understand which activities qualify and connect them with free employment, education, and training opportunities.

Call the Access Customer Service Call Center 1-866-262-9881 for more information.

Many CalFresh recipients will not be affected by the new rules. Exemptions apply to people who are:

Living with a verified physical or mental limitation, or

Identify as an Indian, Urban Indian, or California Indian under the Indian Health Care Improvement Act

The County has created a community toolkit and updated guidance for residents, service providers, and community organizations to understand the changes. These

resources include fact sheets, FAQs, and outreach materials available through:

The CalFresh and Medi-Cal Community Toolkit

The CalFresh/Medi-Cal Work Requirements information page

Check County mailed notices or for updates

Contact the County if you're unsure whether ABAWD rules apply to you

Keep your contact information up to date

For assistance, residents can call the Access Customer Service Call Center at 1-866-262-9881, call 2-1-1, or visit 2-1-1.org , go to any County Family Resource Center, or visit BenefitsCal.com .

The County will continue working with community partners to ensure residents understand the new requirements and have the support needed to keep their food benefits.

County of San Diego news release · May 15, 2026

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