

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

Self-Funded County Airports Support Economy and Travel Community



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Following this week’s release of the County’s proposed budget, the Board of Supervisors approved a new aviation lease at McClellan-Palomar Airport providing more options for travelers.

When budgets are tight and leaders must make hard choices, it is easy to see the value of County services that don’t rely on taxpayer dollars.

That is the case with our County airports. All County airports, including our only commercial-service facility, McClellan-Palomar, are self-funded through the Airport Enterprise Fund and grants.

McClellan-Palomar Airport, our largest, supports economic activity and provides convenient travel for people in North County and the region. Commercial flights that returned to Palomar Airport last year have been very popular. American Airlines flights are at 80% capacity, which is very good according to the airline industry.

Palomar Airport directly supports 2,600 jobs in the region, drives about \$83 million in industry activity, and generates approximately \$15 million in federal, state, and local taxes each year.

The airport also benefits from Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) grants, which cover over 90% of its capital costs.

Over the years, the County received \$53 million dollars from the FAA to help build and maintain airport infrastructure at Palomar Airport.

While federal dollars support the

airport capital improvements, operations at all County airports, including Palomar, are funded through the Airport Enterprise Fund. Leases, fees, charges, grants, and other contributions, allow the County’s Department of Public Works to operate every airport safely, efficiently, and cost-effectively.

County of San Diego news release · May 22, 2026



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COUNTY

Leaders Across the State Call for Continued Mobile Crisis Funding

Behavioral health leaders across California and the San Diego County Sheriff gathered yesterday to highlight the lifesaving impacts of Mobile Crisis Response Teams (MCRTs) as state budget cuts put the future of services at risk.

Mobile crisis services were authorized in 2021 under the American Rescue Plan Act with an 85% federal match for participating states. The State covers the remaining 15% share of cost. The federal match is slated to drop to 50%, increasing the State’s share of cost to 50% and prompting proposed state-level funding changes.

Under the Governor’s budget proposal, mobile crisis response would no longer be a mandatory statewide Medical benefit. Beginning April 1, 2027, the service would become optional for

counties, allowing the State to eliminate funding for the services.

Counties wanting to continue the mobile crisis service would then be responsible for \$168 million in statewide costs, a shift that could prompt local programs to scale back.

In San Diego County, 44 MCRTs bring trained mental health clinicians, case managers and peer support specialists to people experiencing mental health or substance use crisis. The teams help deescalate situations, stabilize people where they are and reduce the use of emergency rooms and law enforcement response.

“Mobile Crisis Response Teams have become a staple in our behavioral health system and a regional asset,” said County Behavioral Health Services Director Nadia Privara Brahms. “They are arguably the most effective behavioral health intervention added in decades. Eliminating state funding would undo years of progress, especially for underserved communities.”

Since launching in 2021, local teams have responded to 32,000 calls. Of those, 80 percent were diverted from emergency rooms and about 18 percent were diverted from law enforcement intervention, helping officers remain available for other emergencies.

“Mobile Crisis Response is a force multiplier. It supports first responders, keeping deputies focused on high priority calls while ensuring people in crisis receive the care they need,” said San Diego County Sheriff Kelly A Martinez. “Mobile Crisis Response must be a priority for the Governor, it improves safety, compassion and is smarter public service.”

The teams also help people avoid unnecessary hospitalization or jail time and connect people to long term behavioral health support and housing.

Locally, the County has also expanded MCRTs to Tribal communities

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

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Leaders Across the State Call for Continued Mobile Crisis Funding

and K-12 schools, colleges, and universities. Over the last 18 months the teams have responded to more than 600 calls in schools.

The program costs \$24 million locally and is funded primarily through state and Medi-Cal funding, with some local funds to support people who are uninsured.

Mobile Crisis Response Teams are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to support people of all ages who are experiencing mental health or substance use crises. Services are offered in English and Spanish, with interpreter services available for other languages.

To request MCRT, call 9-8-8 . A trained counselor will determine the appropriate response and can dispatch MCRT directly.

A Zoom recording of the press conference is available online . The passcode is BtHm+y2f.

County of San Diego news release · May 22, 2026

COUNTY

New Firehawk Helicopter Now Stationed at Ramona Air Base

San Diego County’s wildfire response just got a major boost. A new CAL FIRE Firehawk helicopter is now permanently based at the Ramona Air Base and officially went into service on Monday.

“When wildfire strikes, minutes matter,” said County Board of Supervisors Chair Terra Lawson-Remer. “This Board has made wildfire readiness a top public safety priority and permanently basing this Firehawk helicopter in San Diego is a major result of that work. San Diego County stepped up, invested in this partnership with CAL FIRE, and delivered a stronger, faster, more capable tool to protect families, homes, and communities across our region.”

The Sikorsky S-70 Firehawk helicopter brings several upgrades to local firefighting efforts. It can carry more water, has improved safety features, and can support many types of emergency missions, from fighting wildfires to performing rescues.

“This is a milestone event for both CAL FIRE and the County of San Diego. It ends nearly 50 years of intermittent state helicopter coverage in San Diego and greatly increases our operational capability,” said CAL FIRE San

Diego County Fire Chief Tony Mecham. “This has been an incredible journey undertaken for the right reason: to provide a higher level of service not only to San Diego County, but to the State of California.”

In 2025, the County Board of Supervisors funded the purchase of a twin-engine helicopter capable of night operations. The County partnered with CAL FIRE to operate and maintain the aircraft.

The Firehawk carries a 1,000-gallon water tank, hoist rescue equipment and space to transport crews into remote areas.

“This is the first firefighting helicopter for San Diego County Fire,” said County Fire Director Jeff Collins. “The increased water dropping capability of this helicopter compared to the existing Sheriff helicopters is 1000 gallons versus less than 500 gallons.”

Pilots, technicians, and helicopter crews and support staff for wildfire suppression, search and rescue, and hoist and emergency missions have trained for months to bring the helicopter into service, with additional helicopter and hoist rescue training underway.

Collins said crews are also training for night operations, which will take additional time.

The helicopter’s placement in San Diego is the result of a partnership between CAL FIRE Director and Fire Chief Joe Tyler, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and CAL FIRE San Diego Unit’s Aviation Program.

County of San Diego news release · May 27, 2026

COUNTY

County to Work with Youth and Community on Future of San Pasqual Academy

The County Board of Supervisors voted Wednesday to expand opportunities for community input on the future of the San Pasqual Academy and its 238-acre campus.

The County will work with current and former youth, youth advocates and community members to explore options for the campus and its residents.

The Board will receive a 90-day update summarizing what stakeholders say the property should become. A full reimaging is expected in 18 months.

Community engagement began in November and will continue over the next year.

Early ideas include expanding opportunities for youth, adding community wellness

and recreation services, supporting workforce development and creating foster youth housing options.

A draft action plan is expected by December 2027.

San Pasqual Academy opened in 2001 as a first-of-its-kind residential education and support campus for youth ages 12 to 17, with placement options up to age 19.

Over the past 25 years, state and federal policy have shifted toward prevention services and family reunification, reducing the use of group homes.

As of April 2026, 40 foster youth were voluntarily enrolled at the Academy, down from nearly 200 at its peak in Fiscal Year 2009-10.

County of San Diego news release · May 21, 2026

COUNTY

County Animal Services Caring for Animals Rescued from Julian Property

On May 1, County Animal Services, the San Diego Humane Society, and several other shelters and rescue groups partnered to remove hundreds of animals from a property in Julian where they were not receiving proper care.

County Animal Services took in dozens of the rescued animals, including several farm animals.

On May 15, the Humane Farming Association (HFA) transported two pigs, 12 goats, one sheep and several chickens in need of ongoing medical care from the County’s Bonita shelter. The organization sent a specialized trailer and transport team all the way from Minnesota.

“Animal welfare is something that needs every single one of us to be a part of,” said Dr. Brie Sarvis, director and chief veterinarian. “We are only better when we work together.”

Over the next two days, HFA continued their efforts, moving additional animals connected to the Julian rescue, including ducks, turkeys, geese, donkeys, miniature horses, a mule and a horse bonded with one of the minis.

All of the transported animals arrived safely and are beginning new lives in an environment devoted to the lifelong care of farm animals.

For more details, visit the San Diego Humane Society’s Julian Rescue page .

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 · May 21, 2026

COUNTY

\$99.5 Million Grant Advances County Behavioral Health Wellness Campus

This week the County accepted the \$99.5 million dollar state grant to help build the Behavioral Health Wellness Campus in the Midway district.

Behavioral Health Services Director Nadia Privara Brahms told the County Board of Supervisors that once complete, the campus will offer 210 treatment slots and provide a full array of mental health and substance use services.

Board Chair Terra Lawson-Remer said the campus will help reduce wait times, prevent crises instead of just reacting to them, and make it easier for people to access the care they need in one location.

“This investment will provide mental-health and addiction services in one location for more than 20,000 residents ranging from unhoused veterans to working-age adults and justice-involved residents working to overcome addictions,” said Lawson-Remer.

The presentation to the Board also included \$14.35 million shift in Behavioral Health Impact funds, part of a City of San Diego and County partnership to support new behavioral health capital projects within the City.

“Cities are often on the front lines of responding to behavioral health and substance-use challenges,” said Mayor Todd Gloria. “This investment represents the kind of regional partnership we need to expand treatment capacity, connect more people to care, and build a behavioral health system that better serves residents across all 18 cities in San Diego County. I’m proud the City of San Diego is partnering with the County to help advance this important work.”

Set to break ground in 2028, the Behavioral Health Wellness Campus will feature five services designed to support people with mental health and substance use conditions:

Crisis stabilization unit

offering immediate, short-term care for adults experiencing a behavioral health crisis.

Mental health rehabilitation center for people with complex needs transitioning from hospital-level care.

Peer-focused social rehabilitation facility providing intensive short-term care with peer-based recovery support.

Adult residential substance use disorder treatment center with a safe, structured environment for adults receiving residential treatment.

Outpatient community health clinic for adults with mental health or co-occurring conditions.

The campus is expected to care for 23,000 clients a year and open in spring of 2031. It replaces the approximately 60-year-old Rosecrans Health Service Complex, which has been closed for more than four years.

If you or a loved one needs mental or behavioral health support, call 9-8-8 or 1-888-724-7240 to speak to a trained specialist.

County of San Diego news release · May 22, 2026

COUNTY

Foster Youth Thrive When They Live with Family

In San Diego County, 1,074 children are currently in out-of-home care, and nearly half —531—are living with relatives. Placing children with family members is the County’s preferred option.

Kinship care places a child full-time with extended family or close family friends instead of unrelated caregivers or group care. These placements often begin as soon as the child enters foster care and may last weeks, months or even years.

The County’s Child and Family Well-Being (CFWB) department prioritizes kinship placements whenever possible. Research shows foster youth who live with family experience greater stability and less trauma than those placed in non-relative settings. Kinship care is linked to stronger long-term behavioral and mental health outcomes, as well as higher academic success.

Living with relatives also helps children stay connected to their culture, community and siblings while they work toward healing and, when possible, reunification with their parents.

Many kinship caregivers – especially grandparents living on fixed incomes – take on this responsibility with limited resources. To support them, the County offers them

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY (CONTINUED)

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Foster Youth Thrive When They Live with Family

financial, legal, educational and community assistance to help ensure their families remain stable and successful.

It has made a real difference for Jean, Oscar and Valerie — and for so many families across our region

who open their homes and their hearts to keep children safe, supported and connected to the people who love

them.

County of San Diego news release · May 27, 2026

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



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BUSINESS

Chamber-Led Coalition Successfully Advocates on City’s LDC Update

The Chamber led a coalition of business and housing organizations in successful advocacy on the 2026 City of San Diego Land Development Code Update. The Update is an annual package of code changes in the City that implements state law, corrects items in the municipal code, and makes land use and zoning policy reforms. This year’s Update contained approximately 135 items, including items affecting Downtown San Diego specifically.

Chamber staff studied the 135 items meticulously over many months and identified those most impactful to our membership.

Positive changes in the Update include the cutting of red tape for outdoor dining, faster approval processes for telecommunications infrastructure, more opportunities for for-sale housing, and

added development incentives for Downtown commercial corridors.

There were also some negative changes that the Chamber and coalition partners were able to get removed, amended, or clarified. Our coalition worked with City staff to ensure that zoning changes did not negatively impact housing development opportunities or limit homes for San Diegans.

The LDC Update passed the San Diego City Council 7-0, and we look forward to its implementation.

Director of Public Affairs, Evan Strawn, speaking to Council

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · May 27, 2026

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight: American Heart Association San Diego Heart Walk

In a heartbeat, you could be the difference.

The American Heart Association’s San Diego Heart Walk brings communities together to create health and hope for every heartbeat. Every walker who joins, every dollar donated, means more people trained in CPR, more research and more lifesaving moments for everyone.

The readiness of our community to perform CPR could mean the difference between life and death for someone you know or even love. In San Diego and across the country, cardiac arrest remains a leading cause of death, with 9 out of 10 people who experience cardiac arrest outside of a hospital not surviving. Often, this is because bystander CPR was not performed.

By joining the San Diego Heart Walk, you can help change these outcomes. Hands-Only CPR is a simple skill that can make an extraordinary difference. CPR, especially when administered immediately, can double or even triple a person’s chance of survival. And because nearly 70% of out-of-hospital cardiac arrests happen at home, the person needing help is most likely a family member or close friend.

The San Diego Heart Walk is more than a community event. It supports education, promotes healthier lifestyles, helping to prevent heart disease and stroke and funds lifesaving research.

Extraordinary things happen when people take action. A small step. A simple skill. A lifesaving moment.

Extraordinary things happen when people take action. Join the movement on Saturday, September 19 th at Balboa Park. Sign up at

SDHeartWalk.org or contact Jessica Flora at Jessica.Flora@heart.org for more information.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · May 27, 2026

BUSINESS

TJRV Update & Survey Opportunity

Chamber staff met with the County of San Diego’s Office of Economic Development and Government Affairs to coordinate efforts as the County advances an economic impact study on the Tijuana River Valley transboundary pollution crisis.

The Chamber is supporting outreach by distributing surveys to businesses, tourism stakeholders, community organizations, and other partners to capture data on how this issue has hindered economic growth and investment.

The survey should take between 5-20 minutes to complete, depending on the track (business, resident, visitor, or organization). You will be asked questions about how the sewage crisis may have affected you, your household, your business, or your community. Your responses are critical to inform and advance policy and actions to mitigate transboundary pollution, and will be added to other research, data, and

community input. The survey will remain open for about 4 weeks, so please take time to provide your input soon.

This study is expected to be finalized and presented to the Board of Supervisors in October. Chamber also met with the Prebys Foundation and regional stakeholders actively working on this issue to explore opportunities for continued collaboration.

Over the past couple of months, the Chamber has also engaged with key government stakeholders and shared a copy of the Tijuana River Contamination Crisis: A Five-Pillar Framework for Binational Solutions report with regional elected officials. Similarly, the team shared copies of letters to the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and Mexico’s Ministry of Economy outlining proposals to leverage the USMCA trade agreement to advance solutions to transboundary pollution. These efforts contributed to a letter authored by Senators Adam Schiff and Alex Padilla, along with Representatives Scott Peters, Sara Jacobs, Juan Vargas, and Mike Levin, urging USTR to incorporate many of these recommendations into the trade agreement review.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · May 27, 2026

AROUND CALIFORNIA

Statewide news

CALIFORNIA

Escondido Army Veteran Dies After Attack Outside His Home Adorned With Flags and Pro-Trump Signs

A 69-year-old U.S. Army veteran known for displaying American flags and patriotic decorations was beaten outside his Escondido residence and later died from his injuries.

A longtime Escondido resident was fatally assaulted outside his own home last week.

Kerry Sheron, a 69-year-old Army veteran, died from injuries suffered during the

beating.

His wife, Maria Sheron, confirmed to local media outlets that her husband passed away Sunday night.

The attack occurred outside Sheron’s residence, which was decorated with American flags and pro-Trump signs.

A GoFundMe page created by the family states, “It is with shattered hearts that we share that Kerry passed away peacefully on May 24, 2026 surrounded by family and love after suffering a brutal and unprovoked attack outside his home in Escondido, California.”

The page also noted that

Sheron “was a proud U.S. Army veteran known in the community for proudly displaying American flags and patriotic decorations outside his home.”

Local news outlet Fox5SanDiego reported that Sheron was left in critical condition after the Wednesday assault.

A bystander who stepped in to assist was also hurt during the incident.

Authorities arrested a 32-year-old man found nearby, identified as Thomas Butler.

Butler was previously booked into the Vista Detention Facility on attempted murder charges,

according to Fox5SanDiego.

Senate Minority Leader Brian W. Jones (R-San Diego) released a statement on the death.

The lawmaker said the victim “was a family man who served his country in the U.S. Army, and he was a man of strong belief and conviction.”

Jones added that Sheron “believed in the First Amendment and its guarantees of free speech” and “decorated his home with flags and signs that showed his support for freedom, patriotism, and our president.”

The senator described the killing as “unconscionable” and “callous and it was evil.”

He stated, “To kill an elderly man over his political beliefs is not only heartbreaking, it is un-American to its core.”

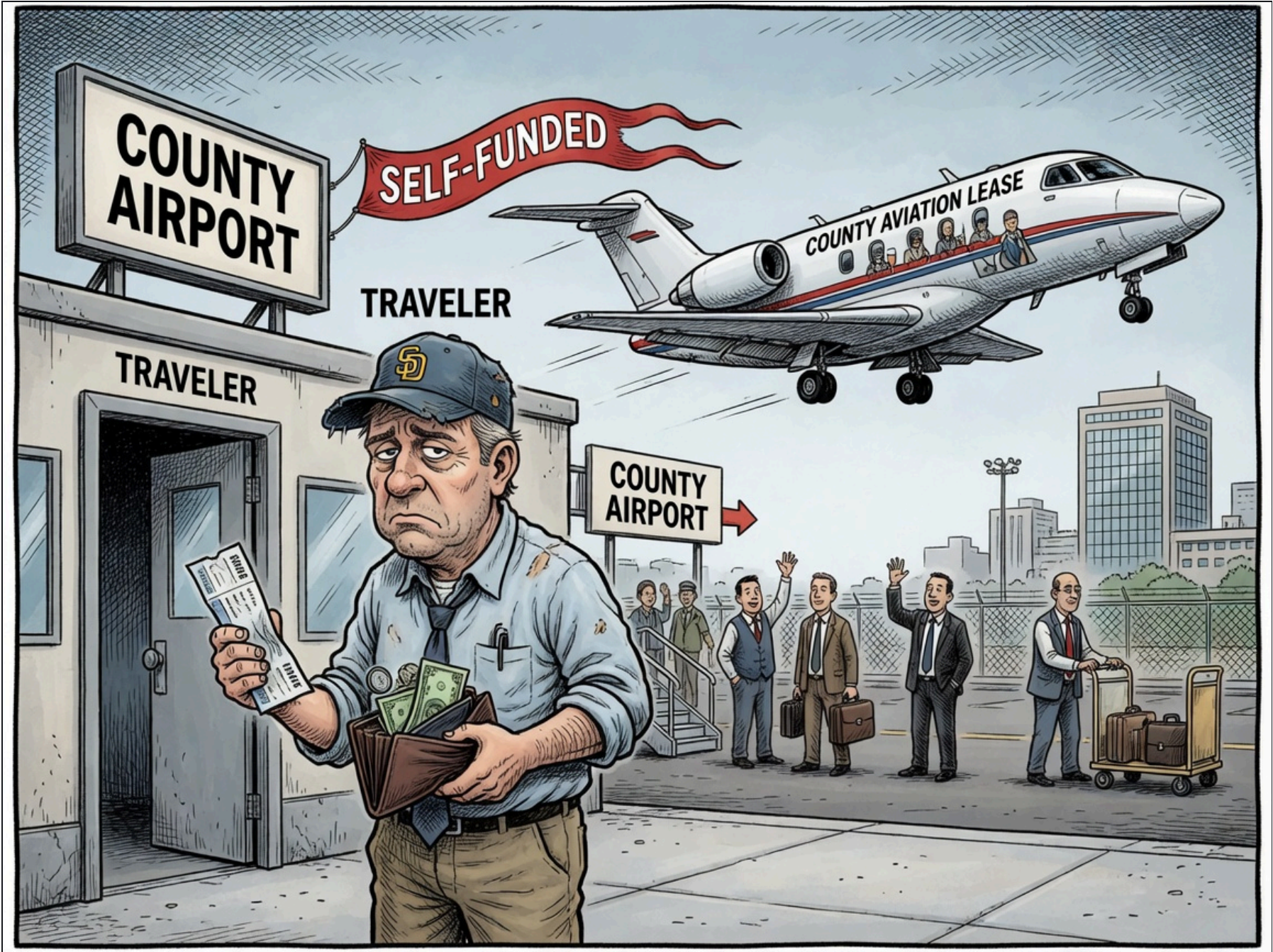
Jones concluded that “political violence is cowardice, and it will not be tolerated” and offered prayers for Maria Sheron and the family.

The San Diego County Medical Examiner’s Office confirmed the veteran’s identity.

The incident has drawn a statement from Jones, who called it a 'truly senseless tragedy.'

San Diego Newsline · Based on reporting by California Globe · May 26, 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 sandiegonewslne.com.	
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MORE NEWS

Downtown, City & County

COUNTY County Warns Against Eating Sport-Harvested Mussels Amid Statewide Quarantine County health officials are reminding people not to eat sport-harvested mussels, clams, scallops or oysters unless they were purchased from a state-certified commercial shellfish harvester or dealer. The California Department of Public Health’s annual quarantine of sport-harvested	mussels is in effect through Oct. 31 . The quarantine covers the entire California coast, including all bays and estuaries. “Toxins such as domoic acid and saxitoxin can build up in mussels along the coast, especially in summer months, and can cause severe poisoning,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, M.D., M.P.H., County public health officer “People can become seriously ill if they eat recreationally harvested mussels during this period. Cooking does not destroy the toxins, and there	is no treatment or antidote. These naturally occurring toxins can cause illness or even death.” Symptoms of paralytic shellfish and domoic acid poisoning, also known as amnesic shellfish poisoning, can begin within 30 minutes to 24 hours after eating contaminated seafood. Mild symptoms may include vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, headache, and dizziness. Severe symptoms may include difficulty breathing, confusion, disorientation, cardiovascular instability,	seizures, excessive bronchial secretions, permanent loss of short-term memory, coma or death. During the quarantine, sport-harvested mussels may only be used as bait. These regulations apply only to sport harvested mussels. Shellfish sold in stores or restaurants, such as mussels, clams, scallops, or oysters, are safe when purchased from state-certified harvesters or dealers. Commercial shellfish must undergo frequent mandatory	state testing to monitor for toxins. More information is available from the County’s Department of Environmental Healthy and Quality. The California Department of Public Health also operates a toll-free Shellfish Information Line at (800) 553-4133 and provides updates on CDPH Marine Biotoxin Monitoring web page . County of San Diego news release · May 26, 2026
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The news, every day.

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