



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

PALOMA AGUIRRE
First District

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Second District

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Third District

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Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: May 5, 2026

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

**PUBLIC HEARING IN COMPLIANCE WITH ASSEMBLY BILL 2561 (AB 2561)
REGARDING COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO VACANCIES, RECRUITMENT AND
RETENTION EFFORTS (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

On September 22, 2024, Governor Newsom signed into law Assembly Bill 2561 (AB 2561). Codified in Government Code section 3502.3, AB 2561 requires public agencies to present the status of vacancies by bargaining unit, and to present recruitment and retention efforts at a public hearing at least once per fiscal year prior to budget adoption. Recognized employee organizations are entitled to make a presentation at the hearing for positions within the organization's bargaining unit.

Government Code section 3502.3 also requires public agencies with vacancies that exceed 20% in a single bargaining unit, to provide additional information including the average number of days to complete the hiring process from when a position is posted and opportunities to improve compensation and other working conditions upon request of the recognized employee organization(s).

This is a request for the Board of Supervisors to receive the 2026 Vacancy, Recruitment and Retention presentation in compliance with AB 2561, and to receive and consider public comment.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Hold a public hearing on May 5, 2026, in accordance with Government Code section 3502.3
2. Receive the 2026 County of San Diego Vacancy, Recruitment and Retention presentation.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Equity is essential in efforts to attract and retain an engaged workforce. Today's presentation provides vacancy, recruitment and retention efforts that will inform the County of San Diego of the status vacancies and areas of challenges in hiring. This will support County departments in retaining a skilled, adaptable, and diverse workforce to provide essential services to the communities served in San Diego.

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SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Maintaining a strong workforce through effective recruitment and retention directly supports the County of San Diego’s sustainability goals by enhancing our ability to consistently deliver essential services, especially during challenging times. Even with our relatively low vacancy rate and strong retention, strategic staffing efforts ensure we minimize potential service disruptions and maximize resource efficiency, enabling us to respond effectively to community needs and safeguard against future economic and social vulnerabilities.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with today’s request to hold a public hearing and receive the 2026 County of San Diego Vacancy, Recruitment, and Retention presentation related to AB 2561. There is no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

On September 22, 2024, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law AB 2561, requiring public agencies to present the status of vacancies, recruitment and retention efforts at a public hearing at least once per fiscal year prior to budget adoption, and entitling recognized employee organizations to present at the hearing.

In passing AB 2561, the legislature determined that job vacancies in local government are a widespread and significant problem for the public sector affecting occupations across wage levels and educational requirements. High job vacancies impact public service delivery and the workers who are required to handle heavier workloads, with understaffing leading to burnout and increased turnover that further exacerbate staffing challenges. The legislature further determined there is a statewide interest in ensuring that public agency operations are appropriately staffed and that high vacancies do not undermine public employee labor relations.

Government Code section 3502.3 also requires public agencies with vacancies that exceed 20% in a single bargaining unit, to provide additional information including the average number of days to complete the hiring process from when a position is posted and opportunities to improve compensation and other working conditions upon request of the recognized employee organization(s). There are 25 bargaining units at the County of San Diego (County) represented by 9 Unions/Employee Associations; none of the County bargaining units meet the threshold of a 20% vacancy rate.

As of March 9, 2026, the County’s overall vacancy rate is 5.1%. The County has 20,250 budgeted positions with 1,033 positions vacant. The vacancy rate by bargaining unit is as follows:

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Union Name	Bargaining Unit	Budgeted Positions	Vacant Positions	2026 Vacancy Rate
Service Employees International Union, Local 221	(AE) Appraisal, Fiscal, and Purchasing	528	52	9.80%
	(CL) Clerical	2,103	126	6%
	(FS) Food Service	154	2	1.30%
	(HS) Health Services	568	80	14.10%
	(MM) Middle Management	1,117	77	6.90%
	(PR) Professional	1,411	135	9.60%
	(PS) Public Services	1,710	63	3.70%
	(RN) Registered Nurses	632	7	1.10%
	(SS) Social Services Supervisors	449	2	0.40%
	(SW) Social Workers	3,069	106	3.50%
District Attorney Investigators' Association	(DI) District Attorney Investigators	90	6	6.70%
	(DM) District Attorney Investigator Middle Management	43	3	7%
San Diego County Deputy District Attorney Association	(AM) Child Support Program Management	4	0	0%

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Union Name	Bargaining Unit	Budgeted Positions	Vacant Positions	2026 Vacancy Rate
	(AS) Child Support Program Attorneys	14	1	7.10%
	(DA) Deputy District Attorneys	342	-3	-0.9%*
Deputy Sheriffs' Association of San Diego County	(DS) Deputy Sheriffs	2,721	133	4.90%
	(SM) Sheriffs Management	30	-1	-3.3%*
Public Defender Association of San Diego County	(PD) Public Defender	155	-4	-2.6%*
	(PM) Public Defender Management	128	0	0%
San Diego County Probation Officers' Association	(PO) Probation Officers	712	37	5.20%
San Diego County Supervising Probation Officers' Association	(SO) Supervising Probation Officers	81	8	9.90%
San Diego Deputy County Counsels Association	(CC) Deputy County Counsel	41	4	9.80%

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Union Name	Bargaining Unit	Budgeted Positions	Vacant Positions	2026 Vacancy Rate
	(CS) Senior Deputy County Counsel	61	2	3.30%
Teamsters Local 986	(CM) Construction, Maintenance, Operations, and Repair	380	39	10.30%
	(CR) Crafts	253	1	0.40%
Classified Not Represented	(CE) Confidential Employee	401	23	5.70%
	(CEM) Confidential Employee Management	1,000	29	2.90%
	(MA) Management	1,379	58	4.20%
Unclassified	(EM, NA, NE, NM, UM)	665	47	7.10%
	Countywide Total	20,250	1,033	5.1%

** A negative vacancy rate is reflected when positions are temporarily overfilled due to workforce transition activities, such as retirement from County service, to allow sufficient training and overlap period for succession planning.*

Recruitment Strategies and Challenges

Department of Human Resources (DHR) in collaboration with hiring departments, conducted 684 recruitments in the preceding one-year period, receiving 85,323 applications from interested job seekers. 1,270 new employees were hired, and 1,785 County employees were promoted. DHR attended 53 outreach and recruitment events between March 9, 2025, and March 9, 2026, connecting with diverse communities throughout the San Diego region. In addition, DHR held 21 Same-Day Hiring events, where candidates received conditional job offers and background checks the same day they are interviewed, allowing for a reduced time to begin employment. These same-day hiring events resulted in 81 candidates accepting job offers.

While the overall vacancy and retention rates continue to be positive, the County is not immune to recruiting and hiring challenges in industries that are experiencing national shortages of labor,

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including engineering, nursing, medical examiners, licensed behavioral health professionals and sworn public safety professionals. DHR recognizes the ongoing challenges in filling these critical roles and remains committed to innovative and proactive strategies in collaboration with hiring departments. Ongoing efforts include expanding outreach, leveraging relationships with schools that produce professionals in these industries, collaboration with professional membership organizations, direct mailings and emails, revising minimum qualifications to broaden the candidate pool and increase the number of applicants who meet eligibility requirements, conducting hiring halls, and enhancing recruitment processes to streamline and expedite the overall hiring process. As a result, vacancy rates have dropped across several key roles. The Civil Engineers vacancy rate decreased from 12% in 2025 to 7.5% this year; Licensed Mental Health Clinicians vacancies decreased from 21% in 2025 to 9.6% in 2026. Certified Nurse Assistant vacancies decreased from 8% to 2.3%, and Deputy Sheriff vacancies decreased from 4% in 2025 to just 0.8% this year.

The County continues to offer recruiting incentives for hard to fill positions, which resulted in 323 hires during the preceding year, including public safety professionals, nurses, engineers and equipment operators.

Retention Strategies

The County's overall retention rate for the period of March 9, 2025, to March 9, 2026, is 93%, an increase of 1% reported in 2025. The Gallup Organization recommends targeting a retention rate of 90% or higher, which the County has exceeded. Healthy turnover is needed for all organizations to progress by bringing together diverse perspectives and new skillsets and allowing career growth opportunities.

A skilled and diverse workforce is the foundation of providing services to the communities served in San Diego, and creating a sense of belonging for employees is at the forefront of the County's culture. Key elements to increasing retention of the County workforce include maintaining clear career pathways that offer employees meaningful opportunities for advancement and growth within the organization; leveraging teleworking and alternative work schedules to support optimal work-life balance where operationally feasible; and, consistently engaging with employees to gather insights and identify opportunities for organizational improvement and development.

The County has made substantial progress in filling vacancies and building a skilled, diverse, and engaged workforce. These efforts have reduced vacancy rates from nearly 20% in July 2022 to 6% in March 2025, and 5.1% in March 2026. In the coming fiscal years, departments will continue to closely monitor vacancies and prioritize hiring decisions to ensure delivery of core public services.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

These actions are aligned with the County of San Diego's 2026-2031 Strategic Plan Initiatives of Sustainability, Community, Justice, Equity, and Empower. Approval of the recommendations

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allows the County to develop, maintain, and attract a skilled, adaptable, and diverse workforce dedicated to sustaining operational excellence and serving as enablers of these Strategic Initiatives.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ebony N. Shelton" followed by "FOR".

EBONY N. SHELTON
Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

N/A