

2026 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

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2026 LEGISLATIVE PRINCIPLES

The Legislative Platform is supported by the County's eight legislative principles. These principles serve as a guide for the County in developing a position on any forthcoming federal and state legislation.

1. JOB GROWTH AND ECONOMIC VITALITY

The County supports economic vitality through the development of employment opportunities and promotion of local businesses. It advocates for workforce training and for workforce development strategies that dismantle structural, economic, and cultural barriers to employment. The County also supports collaboration between public, private, educational, and nonprofit sectors to foster economic vitality, growth, and innovation.

2. EFFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY AND OPERATIONS

The County supports efforts to streamline regulatory processes and promote operational enhancements, including advancements in technology that provide more efficient service to customers. The County opposes policies that create undue fiscal, regulatory, and operational burdens on departments.

3. FISCAL STABILITY

The County supports generation of new intergovernmental revenue, and predictability and enhancement of existing revenue and reimbursement levels. It opposes the loss of existing revenue and the creation of unfunded mandates. The County supports timely adoption of state and federal budgets.

4. INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION

The County supports partnerships with neighboring cities, special districts, regional associations, tribal agencies, and other organizations on mutually beneficial issues, including disaster response and resiliency, transportation, housing, broadband, and protection of women and children, the elderly, and other at-risk populations. The County supports the advocacy efforts of aligned organizations such as the California State Association of Counties (CSAC), National Association of Counties (NACo), Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG), Regional Economic Action Coalition (REACH), Economic Development Collaborative (EDC), Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians.

5. LOCAL CONTROL

The County supports local authority and control over governance issues, land use policies, and the delivery of services, including flexibility and customization in designing and implementing policies that are responsive to the community's preferences. The County advocates for direct distribution of federal funds to local governments, rather than by state or regional pass-through.

6. HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES STABILITY

The County supports maintaining and enhancing safety net services that protect the most vulnerable within the County, including children, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, the unhoused, and other at-risk populations. It supports collaboration between federal, state, and local governments in the delivery and funding of these services. The County opposes reductions in reimbursement amounts and changes in policy that reduce service levels.

7. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

The County supports eliminating disparities, expanding access, and ensuring fair distribution of resources for marginalized and disadvantaged populations. It supports efforts to remove language and education barriers and creation of opportunities for diverse individuals to participate fully in decision-making processes. The County prioritizes embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion across health, mental wellness, education, employment, economic development, and public safety sectors.

8. CLIMATE SUSTAINABILITY, RESILIENCE, AND ADAPTATION

The County supports efforts to meet climate sustainability and resilience goals and to implement adaptation measures, in accordance with the County's Climate Action Plan (CAP). The CAP aims to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 50% below 2018 levels by 2030, in alignment with California's goals to reduce GHG emissions to 40% below 1990 levels and achieve carbon neutrality by 2045. The County supports opportunities that facilitate implementation of the CAP, including developing robust programs for countywide reduction of GHG emissions.

2026 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES – BY TOPIC AREA

The Legislative Platform identifies specific issues for state and federal advocacy, organized by topic area. Supported by the principles, these issues provide more detail about the County’s position on certain topics.

Economic and Workforce Development

The County supports:

Economic Enhancement

- Diversification, development, incubation, and growth of key economic sectors, including space and aerospace, clean tech and renewable energy, high tech, precision manufacturing, agricultural tech, health and life sciences, and building design and construction.
- Local education and workforce training investment, particularly in emerging and growing sectors.
- Expanding workforce training and employment opportunities for diverse and disadvantaged populations.
- Establishing or expanding revolving economic development loan funds, small business grants and loans, community development loans and investments, and equity capital and tax relief for startup businesses.
- Housing and infrastructure development projects as job creators and economic engines.
- Creation of workforce housing, both affordable and market rate, to increase capacity for job growth.
- Partnerships across sectors that lead to growth and innovation.

Advancement of Women and Girls

- Programs and services that improve the lives of women and girls, including economic empowerment opportunities, access to health care, affordable and accessible high-quality childcare, additional family leave, and extension of the child tax credit.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

- Comprehensive immigration reform that improves and simplifies the current legal immigration system and includes a national strategy for coordination among federal, state, local and tribal authorities.
- Policies requiring law enforcement officers, including immigration agents, to clearly identify themselves and their agency affiliation during public operations including prohibition of the use of face coverings or disguises by agents, except for specialized gear, personal safety equipment, or where there is a clear and specific threat to officer safety.

- Upholding constitutional civil rights protections, including due process, equal protection, and freedom from unlawful searches and seizures.
- Reinstating and codifying policies that prohibit immigration enforcement in sensitive locations such as schools, hospitals, and places of worship.

Marketplace Equity and Consumer Protection

- Preserving and enhancing resources for weights and measures programs, clear labeling, and accuracy of net quantity.
- Consumer protection through quantity control and package inspections at the local level.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

- Reauthorizing the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) with support for all three funding streams: adult programs, youth programs, and programs that support local businesses.
- Preserving local autonomy and flexibility with WIOA, which are critical for an adaptive and effective local workforce development system.

Cannabis Industry

- Maintaining a well-regulated cannabis industry, eliminating illegal cannabis operations, and protecting the health, life, safety, and general welfare of residents.
- Declassification of cannabis as a Schedule I drug and resolution of conflicts between state and federal law.
- Banking services that reduce public safety issues created by a cash-based industry.

Broadband Infrastructure and Digital Equity

- Improving availability, accessibility, competition, resiliency, and reliability of high-speed broadband internet service.
- Leveraging regional partnerships for broadband implementation.
- Ensuring internet speeds keep pace with increasing demand from households and businesses.
- Infrastructure deployment in rural communities and along key routes that connect regions of the County.
- Efforts to promote digital equity and close the digital divide.

Community Development

The County supports:

Community Development

- Addressing the housing needs of households across all levels of income and employment sectors.
- Allocation of funds to jurisdictions by formula rather than on a competitive basis.
- Allowing jurisdictions to directly administer their allocations for eligible uses via grants or loans and allowing the use of loan repayments to support additional eligible uses.
- Creation of public-private partnerships to develop housing and services.

Housing

- Development of new housing to serve very low and low-income households.
- Programs such as Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), HOME, and HOME American Rescue Plan Program (HOME-ARP) that provide additional public services, capital improvements, and new affordable housing.
- Programs like the Permanent Local Housing Allocation (PLHA) program that support homeownership, new housing construction, tenant-based rental assistance, and supportive services to keep people stably housed.
- Expansion of the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, which provides incentives for private investment in the development of new affordable and supportive housing units.
- Incentives and support for employers to build workforce housing for their employees, including housing for moderate and upper moderate incomes.
- Maintaining inclusionary affordable housing requirements for market-rate development projects.
- Restoring the Mortgage Credit Certificate program and preserving how the bond cap intended for single-family is used.
- Amending the Coastal Act by reprioritizing the hierarchy of resource protection values, such that affordable housing for very low and low-income households has equal or greater value than agricultural resources under certain circumstances (for example, on agricultural lands that have non-prime soils or impervious surfaces, are not in agricultural production, are located near urban areas and urban services, or are not located near environmentally sensitive habitat areas).
- Facilitating local jurisdictions updating regulations to comply with state law, by slowing the pace of legislative updates or instituting a minimum 18-month adoption period between when new laws are adopted and when they go into effect.
- Allowing extensions for local jurisdictions to complete housing element updates, provided jurisdictions are making meaningful progress.
- Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of regulatory entities that support local jurisdictions, such as State Housing and Community Development certification of housing element updates and Coastal Commission certification of local program amendments.

- Requiring determination of the housing needs for each region at least three years before the region’s housing element adoption deadline.
- Establishing support for jurisdictions with approved housing elements to implement their programs and actions and update regulations to comply with state law.
- Legislation and regulatory changes that provide counties with local authority and flexibility similar to school districts, to develop, lease, or partner for the development of county-owned, underutilized, or surplus land for affordable housing, workforce and teacher housing, interim shelter, and supporting community facilities.
- Simplified permitting, direct state funding, and statutory authority to prioritize the use of county land for public benefit, including pilot projects, housing, and shelter programs.
- Extending allowances and streamlined procedures—such as those available to school districts—to county-owned property, enabling counties to implement innovative housing solutions, including local preference for public employees, to address local needs, including on parking lots, surplus parcels, and non-essential county facilities.
- Urging the State to allow or facilitate the re-use of State-owned underutilized sites for affordable housing and Safe Parking Programs.

Arts and Culture

- Initiatives from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the California Arts Council (CAC), as well as federal rural community development funding.
- Connections between public and private sectors that support arts and culture, including charitable giving.
- Community access to the arts through creative and cultural engagement opportunities.
- Programs that link the arts to addressing social services needs.
- School-based arts education and preparation of the next generation workforce.

County Library Services

- Resourcing and supporting local libraries as essential community resources.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space

- Preservation of critical open space and enhancement of public access, including support for local entities that are park-deficient.

Government

The County supports:

Unincorporated Powers

- Affording general law counties the same governance powers afforded general law cities, to address the full spectrum of service and infrastructure needs in unincorporated areas.

Brown Act and Public Access

- Enhanced access to public meetings through technology like video conferencing.
- Streamlining Brown Act and regulatory requirements to promote more efficient and environmentally-conscious public meetings, such as by eliminating original paper copy requirements.
- Access to training on Brown Act requirements.

Tribal Relations and Collaboration

- Fair and equitable relationships between tribal and local governments, protecting the health, safety, and welfare of all community members.
- Partnership with local tribes on initiatives such as economic vitality efforts, including broadband infrastructure and technology.

Health and Human Services

The County supports:

Access to Quality Health Services

- Services that improve community health and include, but are not limited to, preventive and emergency health care to the uninsured and underinsured, Medi-Cal, mental health and substance use services, HIV/AIDS programs, maternal and child health, adult protective services, supportive housing, dependent care, child welfare services, adoptions and foster care, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (CalFresh), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), early childhood care and education, and unemployment assistance and training.
- Measures that establish or enhance programs, research, standards, educational material, and public awareness campaigns that prevent disease, promote wellness, and ensure access to needed health care.
- Organizational infrastructure for public healthcare organizations.

Behavioral Health Care

- Promotion of local behavioral health treatment options for individuals and their families.
- Expanding inpatient behavioral health facilities, including Institutions for Mental Disease (IMDs) and community-based facilities.

- Expanding outreach, treatment, and follow-up care for persons with debilitating behavioral health conditions, including primary substance use disorder, primary mental health conditions, severe and persistent mental illness, and co-occurring disorders.
- Increased options for substance use disorder treatment, grounded in research and evidence-based practices.

Homelessness

- Addressing the issue of homelessness by stabilizing people and families in their existing housing and by developing supportive housing, services, and treatment programs for those experiencing homelessness.
- Expansion of programs that support housing for families with the lowest incomes, such as tenant-based and project-based rental assistance, public housing operating funds, and public housing capital grants.
- Development of supportive housing and services, particularly for veterans.
- Streamlining approvals for housing construction.
- Allowing more flexible use of state and federal homelessness funding.
- Multi-year, reliable funding to allow communities to invest in housing and program infrastructure, such as through the Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program, Homekey, Behavioral Health Bridge Housing (BHBH) program, and California Encampment Resolution Funding (CERF) program.

Safety Net Preservation

- Restoration and maintenance of safety net programs for the County's most vulnerable residents.
- Mitigating the impacts of recent legislative changes to Medi-Cal, CalFresh, and other programs on clients and implementing agencies.
- Addressing the effects of inflation and the increasing cost of doing business for agencies.
- Increasing outreach to people who qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other anti-poverty programs.

Senior Services

- Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act.
- California's Master Plan for Aging, including the development of local implementation strategies.
- Increased services to promote the safety, health, and well-being of older adults and individuals with disabilities, including support for family/friend and professional caregivers.

TANF Reauthorization

- Long-term reauthorization of the TANF program, with substantive changes to enhance flexibility to adjust services based on families' unique needs.
- Reversing the detrimental effects of the 2005 TANF Reauthorization changes to the Work Participation Rates (WPR) formula and definition of "work."
- Balancing federal oversight with local flexibility and utilizing outcome-based measures of success.

Streamlining Eligibility

- Streamlining eligibility procedures across the state's three major assistance programs: CalFresh, Medi-Cal, and CalWORKs.
- Seeking federal waivers in six areas:
 - Align income verification requirements across CalFresh, CalWORKs and Medi-Cal.
 - Reduce the complexities to determining student eligibility for CalFresh.
 - Create a new, simplified application and recertification forms for CalFresh.
 - Allow CalFresh application and recertification interview waivers for individuals known in the system who have submitted a complete application or recertification packet with all mandatory verifications.
 - Eliminate the semi-annual and mid-period Income Reporting Threshold (IRT) reporting requirements in CalFresh.
 - Provide a permanent Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) time limit waiver for CalFresh.

Children and Families

- Quality early care and education that readies children, families, and communities for academic success.
- Expanding childcare services and subsidized spaces, especially for infants and toddlers.
- Promotion and expansion of tax credits for families.
- Job protections for workers that include paid family leave.

Ocean Water Testing

- Development and implementation of rapid ocean water testing, which would allow results to be quickly disseminated to the public and postings of beach warnings and closures to be timely.

Food Vending

- Ensuring an effective local licensing and enforcement program for roadside and sidewalk food vendors, which protects vendor livelihoods and the health and safety of customers.

Public Safety and Criminal Justice

The County supports:

Public Safety

- Enhancing safety and security of county residents and businesses.

Criminal Justice Reform

- Alignment with the goals of the Santa Barbara County Public Safety Realignment Act Plan, focusing on reducing recidivism, utilizing alternatives to detention, and providing services for successful community re-entry.
- Addressing the "revolving door" problem, with inmate behavioral health management, holistic defense, and support for programs like the national Stepping Up Initiative and mandated drug treatment pursuant to Proposition 36.
- Furthering development of diversion programs and reentry from prison programs.
- Expansion of juvenile placement options, transitional housing for justice-involved youth, and co-response teams.
- Addressing the critical and chronic need for clinical social work within all county agencies working with justice-involved youth and adults.
- Expanding resources, flexibility and innovation for addressing the needs of youth in secure settings, as well as serving and supporting youth in their transition from secure confinement and into the community.
- Securing pretrial resources which cover the full costs of enacted policies at a level that does not require county supplementation and providing courts with options to encourage appropriate and safe releases.
- Increasing Medi-Cal reimbursement for inmate behavioral health treatment and for unsheltered and transient residents with behavioral health disorders, especially Community Assistance, Recovery, and Empowerment (CARE) Act participants.
- Multi-year, reliable funding for survivors of crime through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) or other means, to help survivors obtain necessary services such as restraining orders, provide emergency housing, court accompaniment, forensic exam administration and counseling services.

Indigent Defense Services

- Statewide implementation of equitable, sustainable funding to ensure that public defense systems can meet workload, staffing, and infrastructure requirements.
- State appropriations that enable counties to meet minimum attorney and support staff workload standards.
- Creation of a dedicated state funding stream to supplement county resources for public defense operations, training, technology, and case management infrastructure.

- Workload-based funding formulas that reflect actual caseloads, case complexity, and regional cost differentials.
- Data collection, evaluation, and accountability measures to sustain transparency, quality, and equity in the delivery of indigent defense services.

Agriculture

The County supports:

Agricultural Enterprise and Practice

- Assisting agricultural landowners in enhancing the economic productivity of their operations, while maintaining agriculture as the primary land use.
- Promotion of animal welfare, including humane care and protection of animals.

Invasive Species

- Pest and disease prevention programs and eradication activities, including local flexibility to address pest emergencies and high priority local pest exclusion pathways.
- Research on invasive species pathways and resources to close those pathways.
- Maintaining agricultural border stations.

Transportation and Communication

The County supports:

Regional Highway Improvements

- Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) efforts to complete construction of the U.S. Highway 101 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes project.
- SBCAG efforts to fully fund and construct the remaining Measure A Regional Highway Improvement Projects.

Road Funding and Cleaner Transportation

- Efforts to quickly transition to new funding mechanisms for road construction and maintenance, in response to lower tax collections as a result of cleaner transportation.

Telecommunications

- Authority of local governments to regulate the placement, construction, and modification of telecommunications towers and other personal wireless service facilities based on environmental and other impacts.

- Processing deadlines for new telecommunication facilities that allow local agencies adequate time to evaluate proposed projects under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or, if exempt from CEQA, under other planning laws, to address siting and design options to minimize visual and site disturbances.

Emergencies

The County supports:

Emergency Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Resiliency

- Enhancing local government capacity to effectively prepare for, respond to, recover from, and build resilience against all emergencies, through adequate funding, empowered local leadership, investment in resilience, and promotion of community-based preparedness.
- All aspects of emergency management, including personnel, equipment, outreach, infrastructure, planning, training, and exercises.
- Development of climate-resilient, all-hazard, and whole-community emergency response protocols that leverage the unique resources and expertise of local communities.
- Comprehensive recovery programs that address the immediate and long-term needs of affected communities and governments, guided by local priorities, community vulnerabilities, and long-term resilience.
- Ensuring local government fiscal solvency through timely and flexible financial assistance and efficient reimbursement processes from state and federal governments, as well as identifying innovative funding mechanisms.

Climate

The County supports:

Climate Sustainability

- Addressing climate change through continued transition to clean energy and pursuit of climate adaptation and resilience initiatives.
- Recognizing that climate change is increasing the frequency, duration, and intensity of natural disasters.
- Local governments experiencing the economic and financial benefits of the growing green economy.
- Directing resources and benefits to populations and communities that are more vulnerable to climate change due to historic marginalization and underinvestment.

Infrastructure Resilience

- Infrastructure improvements and climate adaptation measures to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters and extreme weather events, including flooding, wildfires, earthquakes, and sea-level rise.
- Development of building codes and standards that promote climate-resilient construction practices.
- Development of green infrastructure solutions.

Community-Based Adaptation Planning

- Developing and implementing comprehensive climate adaptation plans and projects, such as technical and feasibility studies, community-led disaster preparedness programs, resilience centers, incubation of innovative businesses, and related pilot projects.
- Facilitating partnerships between government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private sector stakeholders to address climate-related challenges.

Waste Recovery and Reduction

- Efforts to transition away from products and packaging that cannot be reused, recycled, or repurposed.
- Conserving resources, reducing environmental impact, and creating jobs while lowering government costs.
- Flexibility for local jurisdictions on meeting mandates and assistance with permitting.
- Promoting facilities that divert waste from landfills and incentivizing recycling and renewable energy production.
- Composting and hazardous waste facilities, circular economy initiatives, and extended producer responsibility programs.

Transportation

- Encouraging communities to explore transit alternatives to single-occupancy vehicles in rural and suburban areas.
- Efforts to encourage electric vehicle (EV) adoption, including production and ownership.

Renewable Energy and Electrification

- Streamlined permitting of projects associated with renewable energy, battery energy storage, electrification, and electrical infrastructure upgrades, while balancing safety risks.
- Flexibility in state resource adequacy and other policies to allow continued grid interconnection.

Carbon Sequestration

- Guidance, technical assistance, and financial resources to local governments, including resource conservation districts, to develop and implement local carbon markets.

Oil and Gas

- Efforts to transition away from extractive industries including opposition to any new offshore oil or gas leasing in federal or state waters off the California coast and permanent protection from offshore extractive activities.
- Incentivizing or requiring private oil and gas companies to repair or replace aging infrastructure, including pipelines and tanks and requiring the use of best available safety-related technologies, to reduce the frequency and volume of environmentally-damaging events.
- Providing local jurisdictions with increased regulatory authority and enforcement capability to oversee inspection and maintenance activities of existing and future oil and gas infrastructure.
- Allowing stronger enforcement actions, including increased penalties, to be imposed by the land use authority for oil and gas companies that are in violation of permits and related entitlements.
- Clean-up and removal of idle and orphaned oil and gas wells and equipment, prioritizing wells that pollute the marine environment and equipment that creates public safety or nuisance concerns.
- Strengthening the rules and enforcement capabilities of regulatory authorities, including the California Geologic Energy Management Division (CalGEM) and State Lands Commission (SLC), to require timely and proper abandonment of oil and gas facilities with a responsible party.
- Requiring oil and gas companies to provide comprehensive financial assurance for clean-up in the event of a disaster.

Regional Coastal Management

- The Beach Erosion Authority for Clean Oceans and Nourishment (BEACON) program and other sediment management programs, supporting local sea-level rise policies and programs consistent with the Coastal Act .
- Resolving interpretation disagreements between local jurisdictions and the Coastal Commission regarding sea-level rise.

Biodiversity

- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity, recognizing that diverse ecosystems and connectivity strengthen climate resilience by reducing wildfire risk, safeguarding water quality, and providing natural carbon storage.

Water Management

The County supports:

Wastewater Treatment Systems

- Providing critical long-term, reliable water sources through wastewater treatment systems, particularly as the number of residential units in the County grows.
- Increasing water resiliency with feasibility studies, support for capital costs, and legislative and regulatory streamlining of project approvals.

Flood Control Infrastructure

- Reducing duplicative and overly burdensome regulatory requirements related to flood control, including from the state and federal Endangered Species Acts, Clean Water Act, and California Fish and Game Code, that delay projects and maintenance, increase costs, risk life and property, and restrict the effectiveness of infrastructure performance.
- Completion of the design and construction of the Lower Mission Creek Project, supported by the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA).

Sustainable Groundwater Management

- Effective groundwater management through sustainable, long-term support for the Groundwater Sustainability Agency.

Water Quality

- Ensuring that the implementation of the Clean Water Act, WRDA, and the Porter-Cologne Act benefit County projects and programs.