



BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA LETTER

Agenda Number:

**Clerk of the Board of Supervisors**  
105 E. Anapamu Street, Suite 407  
Santa Barbara, CA 93101  
(805) 568-2240

**Submitted on:**  
**(COB Stamp)**

**Department Name:** Probation Department  
**Department No.:** 022  
**Agenda Date:** December 9, 2025  
**Placement:** Departmental Agenda  
**Estimated Time:** 30 Minutes

**Continued Item:** No  
**If Yes, date from:** <Insert Date>  
**Vote Required:** Majority

**TO:** Board of Supervisors  
**FROM:** Department Director: Holly L. Benton, Chief Probation Officer  
Contact: Maria Story, Deputy Chief Probation Officer  
**SUBJECT:** Community Corrections Partnership's Warrant Analysis and Strategies

**County Counsel Concurrence**

As to form: Yes

**Other Concurrence:**

As to form: N/A

**Auditor-Controller Concurrence**

As to form: N/A

**Recommended Actions:**

That the Board of Supervisors:

- a) Receive a presentation on active warrants held in Santa Barbara County analyzed by type, recency of issue date, severity of offense, and age range of defendant; review current strategies to mitigate the warrant backlog; and discuss key takeaways from the warrant analysis.
- b) Determine pursuant to CEQA Guidelines 15378(b)(5) that the above actions are not a project subject to CEQA review, because they are government administrative activities that do not result in direct or indirect physical changes to the environment.

**Summary Text:**

The item is before your Board to receive a presentation on behalf of the Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) on active warrants held in Santa Barbara County, analyzed by type and recency of issue date, a review of current strategies being undertaken to mitigate the warrant backlog, and an analysis of warrant efforts. Key findings include that the number of outstanding active warrants is at a 15-year low, and only 4% of active warrants are for the most serious crimes. Progress continues to be made on clearing outstanding warrants that are no longer suitable to remain in the system.

## **Background:**

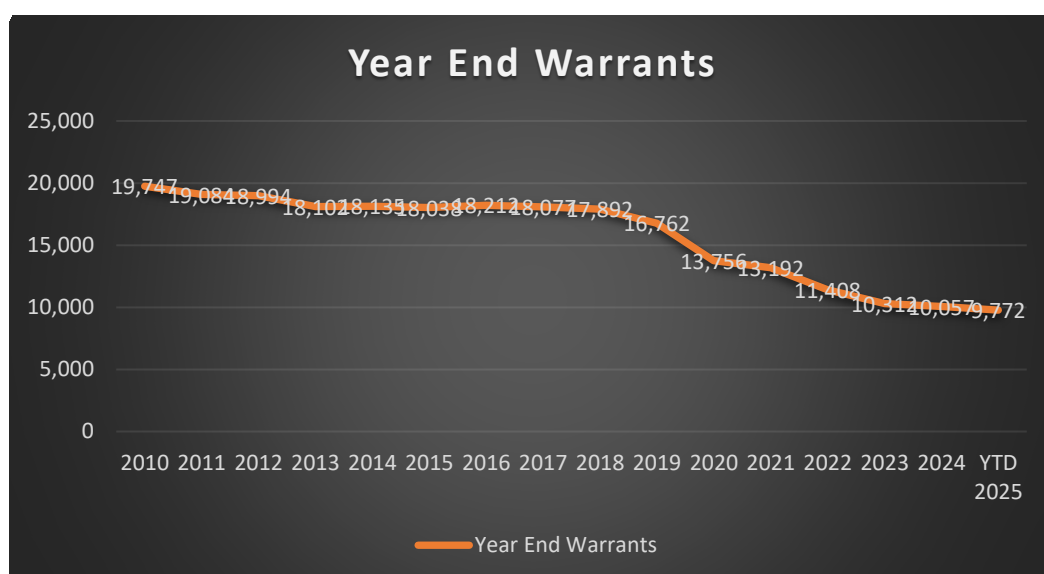
During the June 17, 2025, Board of Supervisors Budget Hearing, the Santa Barbara Sheriff's Office (SBSO) presented on Cannabis Tax Revenue Uses Reimagined, after which the CEO's Office analyzed several revenue expenditure options which included a discussion related to the 9,978 warrants held by SBSO in the Warrants Automated Network Directly Accessed (WANDA) database as of June 12, 2025. Specific discussion focused on SBSO earmarking a portion of cannabis tax revenue to fund a felony warrant detective and a request to further understand the approach of various County departments on the review and termination of the outstanding warrants. Ultimately, the Board of Supervisors referred the warrant topic to the CCP with a request for processes to reduce the current backlog of active warrants, parsing of warrant data, and to recommend potential protocols that could be enacted to ensure warrants are managed more efficiently in the future.

## **Discussion:**

On June 17, 2025, your Board requested that the CCP review the County's 9,978 warrants in order to help the Board better understand why these warrants are outstanding and how to reduce them. CCP Chair and Chief Probation Officer Holly Benton referred the matter to the CCP Workgroup, which initiated a Warrant Ad-Hoc Subcommittee of the CCP Workgroup. Members of the subcommittee included: Deputy Chief Probation Officer Maria Story, SBSO Commander Erik Raney, Assistant District Attorney Kelly Duncan, Santa Barbara Superior Court Chief Deputy Executive Officer Angela Braun, and Public Defender's Office Chief Trial Deputy Callie Steele. This group met to review current efforts to mitigate the warrant backlog, and devise protocols to more effectively process and manage warrants. Topic-specific meetings on warrant management and inventory were held with subject matter experts in smaller groups as well.

## **Historical Warrant Inventory**

A review of the past 15 years of active warrants in the WANDA database showed that the number of current outstanding warrants is the lowest it has been during that period. On average, slightly more than 11,000 warrants are cleared each year.



## Warrant Analysis

While the large inventory of active warrants may initially appear alarming, detailed analysis indicates these warrants represent only a small percentage of significant crimes, such as violent and/or serious felonies, and the current active warrants are at a 15-year low. To make those findings, the subcommittee reviewed how serious the warrant offenses were and whether they posed an active threat to public safety. The subcommittee also examined the age of the individuals with warrants, as well as how old the warrants were, and whether some were so outdated or involved such minor offenses that keeping them active may no longer make sense.

Analyzing the warrant data is complicated because many defendants have multiple charges that do not fit neatly into one category. To review the appropriate cases, the Santa Barbara County Superior Court and Probation Department removed all warrants related to juvenile cases. The rest of the warrants were then organized by the person's age and the type of offense. This helped identify how many involved "strike offenses," which are the most serious felonies that pose the greatest risk to public safety. As the District Attorney has a strict policy on prosecuting driving under the influence (DUI) cases, those warrants—which comprise approximately 16% of active warrants—will not be dismissed and were separated out.

### Recency of Warrant Issue (all warrants as of June 12, 2025)

About 69% of the active warrants, excluding juvenile warrants, were issued in 2020 or later. This is to be expected, as felony warrants stay on file for five years and misdemeanor warrants for three years before they can be cleared.

<i><b>Date Range</b></i>	<i><b>Number of Warrants Issued</b></i>
<i><b>1983-1999</b></i>	88
<i><b>2000-2009</b></i>	403
<i><b>2010-2019</b></i>	2,576
<i><b>2020-June 2025</b></i>	6,845

### Warrants by Offense Type (all warrants as of June 12, 2025)

Most of the warrants, just over 79%, were for misdemeanors, just over 20% were for felonies, and the remaining 0.2% were for civil and infraction warrants. Of the total active warrants, including juvenile warrants, approximately 4% were for felony strike offenses. Simply put, the most serious crimes make up only a small number of all the active warrants.

<i>Type of Offense</i>	<i>Number of Active Warrants</i>
<b>Violent Felony Per §667.5 PC</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Serious Felony Per §1192.7 PC</b>	<b>196</b>
<b>DUI Offense</b>	<b>1,601</b>
<b>Total Felony</b>	<b>2,043</b>
<b>Total Misdemeanor</b>	<b>7,907</b>
<b>Total Civil/Infractions</b>	<b>28</b>

### Age Ranges of Defendants with Strike Offense Warrants (all warrants as of September 19, 2025)

According to a 2018 Federal Bureau of Investigation report, *Crime in the United States*, people are most likely to be arrested for violent crimes before they turn 24, and rates drop after that age. When looking at the current ages of people with strike offense warrants, 87% are now 30 years of age or older, reflecting that they are less likely to commit a new violent crime.

<i>Age Range</i>	<i>Number of Warrants</i>
<b>18-29</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>30-39</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>40-49</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>50-59</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>60-69</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>70-79</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Over 80</b>	<b>2</b>

## Summary of Warrant Backlog Reduction Efforts

To address the large number of outstanding warrants, the Warrant Subcommittee Workgroup developed several strategies involving key justice system partners. The **District Attorney's Office** initially focused on clearing warrants related to non-DUI vehicle code cases. These were chosen as they are mostly minor traffic offenses, such as driving with a suspended license, and typically do not pose a safety risk to the public. After confirming that the individuals with these warrants do not have any open felony cases, the District Attorney's Office grouped these warrants together and requested that they be dismissed. 272 warrants fell into the first batch submitted to the Santa Barbara Superior Court for purging. They will move on to other low-level offenses to continue the process of clearing low-level warranted cases.

In addition, the **District Attorney's Office** will reach out to the **city attorneys of Santa Barbara and Santa Maria** to identify certain misdemeanor municipal code violations—such as public alcohol consumption, exhaust hood violations, or open burning violations—that are often associated with unhoused individuals. Together, they will agree on a time period after which, if the individual has had no further involvement with the justice system, these cases can be dismissed.

The **Santa Barbara Superior Court** is reviewing outstanding warrants and plans to create a process to review older, less serious probation violation warrants unrelated to the commission of new crimes for possible removal, allowing more focus on serious cases.

In the past, the **Santa Barbara Superior Court** and **Probation Department** have worked together on large-scale efforts to clear warrants, such as in 2017, when changes in the law shortened probation periods. At times when staffing allowed, Probation staff have also helped by locating people whose warrants could be dismissed as they had moved out of state, were already in custody elsewhere, or had passed away.

To support the current effort, the **Probation Department** will also continue to focus on serving felony warrants on people currently under probation supervision by holding in-house warrant enforcement events.

Since 2012, the **Probation Department** and **SBSO** have worked together through CCP-funded Compliance Response Teams, which focus on finding and arresting people with active warrants who were moved from State to local supervision under AB 109 Realignment. One way they do this is by creating "hot sheets," lists that include the latest photo of the person wanted, their last known address, birthdate, and a description such as height, weight, hair and eye color, and gender. These lists are shared with local police, who also help find and arrest these individuals. The teams also try to locate these individuals by searching special databases and by listening to jail phone calls to obtain information about where wanted individuals might be.

Funded through cannabis tax revenue, the **SBSO** now has a felony fugitive detective who focuses on locating people with felony warrants. The detective works by gathering information, watching suspects, releasing "hot sheets" to local police departments, and teaming up with other Sheriff's deputies and outside agencies to apprehend those wanted. They sometimes obtain court orders to track a person's location by their cell phone (ping warrant) or to search someone else's home (Steagald warrant) if the wanted person is there. The work of this detective will be reported regularly

to the CEO's Office through quarterly budget and operational updates. SBSO developed the following performance/outcome measures, which the felony fugitive detective will track:

- Achieve a 20% increase in the number of individuals with active warrants booked into Santa Barbara County Jails each month when compared with a FY 2024-25 baseline.
  - FY 2024-25 baseline: 363 warrants booked per month by all arresting agencies
  - Q1 2025-26 actual: 443 warrants booked per month by all arresting agencies
- Apprehend at least 25% of individuals with new serious and/or violent felony warrants within 90 days of warrant issuance.
  - Q1 2025-26 actual: SBSO has indicated this data is not yet available but that it will be included in the next quarterly report to the CEO's Office in April
- Achieve a 20% decrease from the baseline observed in 2025 in the total number of active serious and/or violent felony warrants in the system.
  - June 12, 2025, snapshot day: 405 serious and/or violent felony warrants
  - Q1 2025-26 actual: SBSO has indicated this data is not yet available but that it will be included in the next quarterly update to the CEO's Office in April
- Conduct at least two intelligence-led warrant sweeps or targeted operations per quarter.
  - In Q1 2025-26, six intelligence-led warrant operations took place
- Coordinate the extradition of 80% of all felony fugitive apprehensions occurring outside the state.
  - In Q1 2025-26, the felony fugitive detective coordinated 100% of the eight extraditions on felony fugitive apprehensions occurring outside the State
- Produce and distribute a "hot sheet" of priority fugitives to tri-county law enforcement agencies every quarter.
  - In Q1 2025-26, 29 "hot sheets" of priority fugitives were distributed to tri-county law enforcement agencies, organized by geographical area and jurisdiction
- Update the list of the top 20 most wanted subjects on public-facing websites and social media platforms monthly.
  - In Q1 2025-26, the top 20 most wanted subject list went into production and is anticipated to be live by the end of Q2 2025-26.

### **Current Warrant Purge Protocol**

The current process for reviewing and clearing old warrants was reviewed and found to be working well. Warrants are reviewed at set times before they can be removed, with longer review wait times for serious crimes and shorter time frames for less serious ones. The District Attorney's Office and city attorneys evaluate the warrants before their scheduled removal dates and keep warrants for all felonies and certain misdemeanors, like violent crimes, sexual offenses, or DUIs. The District Attorney's Office started using this process two years ago for new warrants. To reduce the large number of outstanding warrants, they will use the same process to go back and review older warrants from 2022 and prior to decide which ones can be cleared. This will result in batch requests to dismiss being submitted to the Court, but it will take time for the Court to process these, since they are subject to the Court's prioritization and capacity for the administrative processing.

## **Key Takeaways**

### **Strike Offense Warrants:**

Of the 9,978 warrants active on June 12, 2025, only 4% were for the most serious crimes, so most active warrants are for less serious offenses.

### **Declining Year End Warrant Inventory:**

At the end of 2024, the number of active warrants was the lowest it has been in the past 15 years. This steady drop is partially due to fewer new warrants being issued during the start of the pandemic. It also is attributable to the justice partners working hard to arrest people with warrants and clear out old warrants that are no longer relevant.

### **Warrant Purge Protocol:**

The District Attorney's Office is now using a strong system to clear out low-level misdemeanor warrants, as described above. They will also apply this system to older warrants to remove more unnecessary ones, starting with clearing out many warrants related to certain vehicle violations, except for driving under the influence cases.

### **Felony Warrant Service:**

The SBSO felony fugitive detective and the Compliance Response Teams (SBSO and Probation Department staff) will continue focusing on apprehending individuals wanted for the most serious crimes. Notably, in the first quarter of the current fiscal year, warrants cleared by arrest increased approximately 14% from 1,162 arrests in July through September 2024 to 1,328 for the same period in 2025.

## **Fiscal and Facilities Impacts:**

Budgeted: Yes

### **Fiscal Analysis:**

There is no fiscal impact of receiving this report. For FY 2025-26, the SBSO felony fugitive detective is funded through cannabis tax revenue in the amount of \$301,600 as a Special Duty Deputy full-time employee (FTE). The Compliance Response Teams are funded through AB 109 Realignment for a total budget amount of \$982,300 in FY 2025-26 for one Probation FTE, who is a Deputy Probation Officer Senior, and three SBSO FTEs, comprised of two Special Duty Deputies and one Sergeant.

### **Special Instructions:**

None

### **Attachments:**

**Attachment A** – Warrant Analysis and Strategies Subcommittee PowerPoint

### **Contact Information:**

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