



County of Sonoma 2026 Legislative Platform

SUMMARY

Sonoma County's Legislative Platform outlines the legislative priorities and positions of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors. Updated annually, the Platform guides advocacy efforts by the Board, County Executive, and department/agency leaders that aim to serve Sonoma County's best interests at the state and federal levels. Priorities in the Platform are aligned with the County Strategic Plan and other key County strategic planning documents, however, issue areas listed should not be considered a complete representation of the Board's priorities or policy positions.

FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

The following policy goals, listed in alphabetical order, inform Sonoma County's legislative advocacy.

- Governmental Transparency and Public Access: Promote greater access to public meetings and culturally competent government services while implementing methods to prevent disruptions which hinder the Board's ability to conduct regular business and the County's ability to maintain a hostility-free workplace. Balance transparency with the increasing strain on resources and fiscal burden of Public Record Act (PRA) requests in the digital age.
- Infrastructure Investment: Prioritize advocacy that secures funding for critical infrastructure growth, maintenance, and improvement. Ensure public safety and natural resource protection.
- Public Administration: Preserve and enhance funding for state and federal programs that support the County's ability to deliver services. Oppose programs, requirements, and service mandates upon local government by state or federal bodies that do not provide a mechanism for reimbursement or subvention. Oppose reductions in local control and any additional fees unrelated to local services. Support fees that account for cost of living and Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustments for mandated services. Advocate for sufficient funding to deliver mandated services. Oppose federal orders and rulemaking that rescind funding or attach conditions and terms in conflict with state law or local ordinances.
- Public Services Access: Preserve critical safety net programs and continue to remove barriers for those utilizing the public benefit. Support collaboration across local, state, and federal agencies and allow for flexible funding to better serve the public.
- Racial Equity and Anti-Racism: Seek to address the racial inequities experienced by systematically underserved populations through deep and meaningful analyses of equity impacts, including which community members benefit and which are most burdened by government decisions.
- Sense of Community: Foster a sense of community that is welcoming and safe to all residents, businesses, and visitors. Eliminate disparities in quality of life, particularly for members of the community experiencing the most negative outcomes, including those who have been historically underserved.

POLICY PLATFORM

The following policy platform statements provide guidance for staff to take a position on anticipated state and federal legislation impacting local government in 2026. The statements are listed in alphabetical order.

Agriculture



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- Agricultural Trespassing: Prevent serial criminal activity on animal agricultural operations– especially when trespassing causes significant economic losses.
- Farmworker Housing Eligibility Determination: Consider reforms to eligibility determinations for farmworker housing that better reflect the experiences and challenges of the local workforce – such as accounting for mixed income sources in a household and the declining seasonal employment market contributing to unreliable income sources.
- Farmworker Resource Center: Advocate for renewed funding for the Farmworker Resource Center Grant Program previously funded by AB 941 (Bennett, Chapter 203).
- Local Agriculture: Protect and preserve agricultural lands. Maintain and expand capacity for local food agricultural production, and provide the resources necessary for local farms, dairies, and ranches to thrive.

Economic Development and Commerce

- Business Equity and Diversity: Prioritize investments in underserved communities, such as outreach and technical assistance to navigate available programs and resources, assisting with new business formation and entrepreneurship, facilitating efforts to support greater equity and inclusion in contracting and procurement opportunities, and supporting capacity-building of small business assistance organizations.
- Business Financing: Fund incentive programs that spur innovation, encourage business opportunities, expand and simplify access to capital, and stimulate local investments throughout the County.
- Creative Economy: Advance a dynamic economy by investing in arts, cultural, and creative districts.
- Expansion of Geothermal Energy: Promote the use of geothermal energy to ensure a reliable source of renewable and locally produced power.
- Industry Support: Sustain the growth of key industry clusters, including healthcare, agriculture, childcare, construction and trades, manufacturing, and climate-driven technology.
- Sales Tax on E-commerce: Reform the Bradley-Burns sales and use tax to disperse revenue more equitably given the increasing prevalence of e-commerce which concentrates tax in areas that ship goods at the expense of locations where people live.
- Workforce Development: Help residents secure local employment with career ladders for advancement.

Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery

- Cost Recovery for Local Emergency Operations: Advocate for sufficient funding of the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) at the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to ensure reimbursement of costs incurred during local disasters.
- Emergency Preparedness in Disaster Prone Areas: Establish an annual review of emergency planning resources by responsible state agencies in certain disaster-prone areas, such as the Russian River. Allow the responsible state agencies to delegate that annual review of emergency preparedness resources to local governments.
- Loss of Pay in a Disaster: Advocate for the expansion of disaster unemployment insurance to all workers, regardless of immigration status, who lose income due to a locally or state declared disaster. Support programs that provide relief or emergency financial assistance to workers, regardless of immigration status, who lose income due to a locally or state declared disaster.



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- Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS): Seek to mitigate impacts for those affected by PSPS events. Increase oversight of investor-owned utilities such as Pacific, Gas, & Electric (PG&E), especially when conducting PSPS events. Seek support from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to ensure PG&E fulfills its commitment to establishing Community Resource Centers (CRC's) during PSPS events.
- Voluntary Buyouts in Flood Prone Areas: Advocate for resources that would establish a local voluntary property buyout program in certain disaster-prone areas – especially for commercial and residential property owners that face decreased property value because of federal flood hazard mapping.

Health and Human Services

- Aging Services and Long-Term Care: Reduce fragmentation within the long-term care delivery system and adequately fund a system of care that sustains a positive quality of life for older adults and adults with disabilities.
- Behavioral Health Services: Request sufficient funding for local health jurisdictions to implement mandated programs for residents with mental health treatment needs and substance use disorders.
- Child Welfare Services: Stabilize children and families in the foster care system. Promote restorative justice and healing-centered framework initiatives.
- Families, and Childcare: Strengthen early childhood care, support comprehensive health and development, and enhance the ability of First 5 California, local organizations, and commissions to serve communities and families.
- Food Security and Nutrition: Ensure equitable access to affordable, culturally appropriate, fresh, nutrient-rich foods for all communities, address food “deserts” in community plans and development and provide food assistance for all.
- Healthy Communities: Expand integrated systems of care to address gaps in services to the County's most vulnerable and underserved communities.
- Immigration: Support efforts to create pathways to full citizenship and protect immigrant rights, including keeping families together and funding legal services for all immigrants. Protect birthright citizenship and the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. Oppose any public charge rules and support expanding eligibility of social services for undocumented immigrants.
- Inpatient Psychiatric Services: Support action to amend the Institution for Mental Disease (IMD) exclusion, which prohibits federal Medicaid reimbursement for patients receiving mental health care in a facility with more than 16 beds.
- Local Emergency Medical Services (EMS): Ensure a coordinated systems approach to delivery of emergency medical services for area residents by maintaining authority for planning, implementing, and evaluating local EMS systems.
- Older Adults and People with Disabilities: Enhance coordination of services for older adults, especially those with disabilities, to promote independent living, protect against financial and physical abuse, and safeguard against neglect and exploitation.
- Social Security: Ensure that Social Security benefits can continue to function as a vital part of the social safety net for County residents, including core services delivered under Title IV-D of the Social Security Act to help reduce child poverty.



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- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Advocate for the reauthorization of TANF, which is a program designed to help families with children experiencing low-income, achieve economic security and stability.
- Veterans Services: Assist veterans in accessing benefits, housing, and stable employment, and resources for County Veterans Services Offices (CSVOs). Expand outreach services and access to mental and health services.

Housing, Homelessness, and Land Use

- Access to Housing: Support extension and expansion of Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits. Support new resources to help tenants utilize federal Housing Choice Vouchers through landlord recruitment, services, and resources to connect landlords and tenants.
- Affordable Housing: To fulfill the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) obligations, advocate for funding to preserve, rehabilitate, develop and/or convert affordable housing and ongoing operating subsidies needed to serve low-income households. Advocate for modifications to the RHNA methodologies that better recognize and align with differences between urban, suburban, and rural jurisdictions within a particular region, with regard to the provision of municipal services and potential environmental impacts. Support efforts to use surplus publicly-owned lands – by the state, county, or schools – to create more affordable workforce housing for local school, healthcare, and municipal employees.
- Critical Housing Supply: Advocate for amendments to state housing law that are clearer, simpler, and more effective at enabling critical housing projects. This includes but is not limited to supporting clarification of what is considered a ‘public hearing’ for purposes of the 5-hearing rule that excludes informational or community meetings held by the jurisdiction, where a quorum of a decision-making body that will hear the project is not present; supporting clearer statutory exemptions from the California Environmental Quality Act for projects that are appropriately sited; supporting simplifications of and clarifications to the Housing Accountability Act to provide more certainty to the public, developers, and local jurisdictions.
- Establish the Climate and Sustainable Insurance and Risk Reduction Grant Program: Promote innovative approaches to insurance that build economic resilience, especially in uninsured or underinsured communities subject to extreme heat, wildfire risk, flooding, or biodiversity loss, and creating climate resilience districts (CRDs). Support for AB 1236 (Rodriguez).
- Homelessness Funding: Advocate for the annualized and consistent funding from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). Currently, funding from the Homeless Housing Assistance and Prevention (HHAP) program is provided on a year-to-year basis, making it difficult to plan and fund a safety net system with ongoing needs and preventing the innovation and intervention necessary to serve unhoused persons.
- Housing Supply: Support accessibly designed housing for those living with disabilities and/or older adults. Prioritize projects that focus local resources to meet highest climate readiness and resilience criteria, and to areas impacted by natural disaster, while also ensuring that new state-mandated climate legislation considers unintended impacts on low-income residents. Support legislation that preserves mobile home parks as a valuable housing resource while protecting residents from displacement. Support incentives for housing production that reduce transportation and energy costs for residents.
- Wastewater Solutions: Explore options for grey water designation and reuse to facilitate housing infill options in unsewered communities. Expand code sections to include safe and appropriate uses of alternative systems.



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Justice

- California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System (CLETS) Access: Updating California law regarding CLETS access by law enforcement oversight bodies would clarify the authority of oversight entities.
- Service of Process Attempts on Public Employees: Support reform that requires service of process attempts on public employees at their place of employment, for actions related to public employment.
- Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) Funding: Advocate for sustained resources to provide critical victim services.

Parks, Natural Resources, and Climate Adaption

- Climate Resilience: Prioritize land management that emphasizes climate resilience, especially related to climate-durable park design, water catchment systems, shade structures, carbon-smart forestry and grazing practices, fuels management and prescribed fire. Preserve biodiversity and maintain open space for wildlife to adapt as the climate changes. Protect groundwater recharge areas, riparian corridors and critical waterways, and large landscapes that capture, store, and naturally filter drinking water. Preserve forests and grasslands that sequester and store carbon, and conserve coastal lands, wetlands and marshes, and riparian areas that allow for adaption to rising seas. Support the role of working agricultural lands in carbon sequestration.
- Coastal Protection: Protect the North Coast and proactively take measures to adapt to sea-level rise.
- Outdoors for All: Increase conservation of open space and prioritize diverse recreational experiences that can be accessed and are responsive to the needs of all communities, including those who have been historically underserved.
- Parks and Open Space: Serve as responsible stewards of cultural and natural resources. Prioritize new parks in areas where communities currently experience a deficit of access to the outdoors.
- Sea Otter Reintroduction: Support the planning and facilitation of sea otter reintroduction along the North Coast.

Telecommunications

- Broadband: Fund middle and last mile broadband infrastructure to provide affordable, accessible, and reliable high-speed internet for unserved and underserved locations. Support “Dig Once/Trench Once” and other policies that streamline the deployment for underground fiber optic and minimize regulatory burdens and permitting processes for deployment of internet connectivity. Support efforts to require installation of open access broadband. Oppose efforts that remove, threaten, or otherwise damage public access to communication services. Support efforts to increase access, affordability, and adoption of internet service, including reauthorization of the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Improve data collection for more detailed broadband mapping resources. Improve transparency in broadband access data to end digital discrimination.
- Carrier of Last Resort: Oppose efforts that would remove the “Carrier of Last Resort” obligation by incumbent providers to areas without a reasonable alternative.

Transportation

- California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Support for further project and plan exemptions and reasonable CEQA streamlining, including with regard to transportation. Establish statutory CEQA exemption for road repaving and associated right of way maintenance and repair.



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- Modernization of the Road and Repair Accountability Act of 2017 (SB 1, Chapter 5): Support efforts to stabilize transportation funding that relies on a declining source, as electric and hybrid vehicle adoption increases.
- State Route 37: Identify solutions to chronic traffic congestion and periodic flooding, while balancing transportation needs with protecting and enhancing sensitive marshland habitats.
- Vehicle Code Prohibition on Mitigation Fees: Support legislation modifying the prohibition to allow imposition of fees necessary to mitigate road wear and maintenance impacts that are documented either through a nexus study completed under the Mitigation Fee Act or as mitigation identified through the CEQA process.

Tribal Affairs

- Fee-to-trust reform: Support fee-to-trust reform that increases noticing and transparency, addresses the full spectrum of impacts on local governments, and requires that all off-reservation impacts are addressed through enforceable intergovernmental agreements.
- Tribal Land Management: Encourage cultural resource protection, integrate traditional ecological knowledge into land management, and help facilitate land back or cultural access agreements.
- Sovereignty: Respect the sovereignty of federally recognized tribes in government-to-government interactions.



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STATE POLICY PROPOSALS

The following proposals are identified by staff as policy solutions. These proposals authorize staff and the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to sponsor, or join a coalition, seeking to support the following bill ideas in 2026.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for Retirees

Bill Proposal: The County Employees Retirement Law of 1937 authorizes specified cost-of-living increases to be applied to allowances paid to or on account of members of county and district retirement systems. Existing law, applicable to Sonoma County, permits the Board of Retirement in Sonoma County, if approved by the County Board of Supervisors, to provide ad hoc cost-of-living adjustments to certain of the monthly allowances paid by the system to or on account of members of the system, as specified. This bill would clarify that ad hoc cost-of-living adjustments may be provided to some but not all retirees and beneficiaries and ensure that the funding source for the ad hoc cost-of-living benefit was not limited to earnings in excess of the interest credited to contributions and reserves plus 1% of the total assets of the fund as defined in Government Code sections 31871 and 31874.6(b).

Department Sponsor: Sonoma County Employees' Retirement Association

Project Scope Amendment to Build the Behavioral Health Housing Unit (BHHU)

In 2015, the County was awarded \$40,000,000 from the Bureau of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) to build a Behavioral Health Housing Unit (BHHU). The funds were appropriated by the Legislature via Senate Bill 863 (Chapter 37, Statutes of 2014).

Staff recognizes that the award was received based on the number of beds put forward in the original application. However, the current demand for beds and available funding no longer reflects the original awarded project scope. Staff is interested in seeking a legislative solution that will amend the funding terms to today's needs and facilitate a project scope that is feasible. Amending the funding language includes merging the award with other grant sources, such as Behavioral Health Continuum Infrastructure Program (BHCIP).

Department Sponsor: Sonoma County Department of Health Services, Sonoma Public Infrastructure, and Sonoma County Sheriff's Office

Prioritization of Murphy Conservatorships

Currently, the number of Murphy conservatorships in Sonoma exceeds the allocated resources. Staff requests that the Department of State Hospitals (DSH) allow for the placement prioritization of Murphy Conservatorships and increase the number of beds available to Sonoma.

Department Sponsor: Sonoma County Department of Health Services