



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

AGENDA ITEM

DATE: February 10, 2026

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

**PRESENTATION OF A SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL (250TH ANNIVERSARY)
CELEBRATION OF THE UNITED STATES DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AT
WATERFRONT PARK (DISTRICTS: ALL)**

OVERVIEW

San Diego County, the second largest county in California, is home to one of the most diverse and civically engaged populations in the country and holds a unique place in the nation's history. The county also has the largest concentration of military personnel in the world who share with the rest of our constituents a deep and enduring connection to the principles of democracy, service, and equality that underpin the United States Declaration of Independence. As the nation approaches the Semiquincentennial or 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the County of San Diego (County) is uniquely positioned to serve as a regional leader in commemorating this historic milestone.

Today's action requests Board authorization to hold a public Semiquincentennial Celebration on July 4, 2026 at Waterfront Park to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence. The proposed event would include the use of projection mapping displays on the County Administrative Center and authorize vendor participation to support event programming, public engagement, and community activation. Waterfront Park's central location and accessibility make it an ideal venue to host a large-scale, inclusive celebration that reflects the County's historical significance, military presence, and commitment to civic participation.

The proposed celebration also presents a significant opportunity to collaborate with community partners and Downtown San Diego stakeholders to enhance the event's reach, impact, and economic benefit. Potential sponsorships and partnerships may include, but are not limited to, ACE Parking, San Diego Metropolitan Transit System, San Diego Padres and Ballpark Events, Petco Park concessions and vendors, USS Midway Museum, Downtown San Diego Partnership, Gaslamp Quarter Association, Little Italy Association of San Diego, Petco Park concert and event entertainment companies, and the San Diego Tourism Authority. These collaborations would support strengthening ties between the County and the broader downtown business and cultural community.

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Approval of this request will allow the County to commemorate a defining moment in the nation's history through an event that honors San Diego County's role as a center of military service, civic pride, and community partnership, while creating opportunities for public engagement, local business participation, and regional collaboration.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

SUPERVISOR JOEL ANDERSON AND SUPERVISOR JIM DESMOND

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to take the necessary actions to facilitate and support the planning and implementation of a Semiquincentennial (250th Anniversary) Celebration of the United States Declaration of Independence at Waterfront Park, including coordination of site use, approval of projection mapping displays, and authorization of vendor participation in support of the event.
2. Direct the CAO to foster partnerships and actively pursue sponsorships and collaborative opportunities with, and accept donations from, public, private, and community stakeholders, including downtown San Diego organizations, to support the planning, programming, and execution of the Semi Quincentennial (250th Anniversary) Celebration at Waterfront Park and to enhance public awareness, engagement, and participation in the event.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The Semiquincentennial Celebration at Waterfront Park is designed to be inclusive and accessible for all San Diego County residents by ensuring free public admission, multilingual materials, and ADA-compliant facilities. The event will actively engage small businesses and vendors to promote economic equity, while programming will reflect the diverse cultural contributions that shape our nation's history.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for the actions requested to collaborate and plan for a Semiquincentennial (250th Anniversary) Celebration of the United States Declaration of Independence at Waterfront Park are partially included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 Operational Plan based on existing staff time in the Department of Parks and Recreation and Department of General Services funded by existing General Purpose Revenue and Charges for Services to support planning for the event. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

Funds to support direct costs of the event, including vendors, equipment, and supplies, are not included in the FY 2025-26 Operational Plan and will depend upon availability of sponsorships and collaborative opportunities. At this time, there is no funding source budgeted to support direct event costs and the event would not proceed without financial support from sponsorships or reallocation of existing funding. Staff would return to the Board for any necessary actions to accept

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sponsorships and/or appropriate identified funding as needed. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

The County of San Diego (County) has a longstanding commitment to encouraging the participation of large and small businesses in County contracting opportunities and recognizes the vital role the local business community plays in supporting County initiatives. Approval of this request provides an opportunity to further advance these efforts by facilitating vendor participation at Waterfront Park, thereby expanding outreach and engagement while enhancing access to economic opportunities for local businesses.

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

The Semiquincentennial of the United States in 2026 represents a nationally significant milestone that invites reflection on the country's founding principles and their continued relevance in modern civic life. Across the nation, states, counties, and municipalities are preparing commemorative activities intended to promote historical understanding, civic education, and public participation. Local governments play a critical role in these efforts by providing accessible public spaces and facilitating community-based celebrations that reflect regional history and identity.

San Diego County's historical development and contemporary role within the nation position it as a natural venue for commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. As the second largest county in California, San Diego County is home to a diverse population and one of the most robust regional economies in the state. The county also has the largest concentration of military personnel in the world, and a substantial veteran population, reinforcing its longstanding connection to national service, constitutional governance, and democratic values. This deep-rooted relationship to the nation's defense and civic institutions underscores the relevance of commemorating the Semiquincentennial at the local level.

The County of San Diego (County) has a strong history of supporting public events and commemorations that bring residents, visitors, and community partners together in shared civic spaces. Waterfront Park, and adjacent to key cultural and historical institutions, has served as a venue for numerous large-scale public gatherings, celebrations, and educational events. Its use for historically and civically focused programming is consistent with past County practices and supports broad public access and visibility.

Large-scale public commemorations of this nature are most successful when developed in coordination with community partners, cultural institutions, and local stakeholders. Downtown San Diego is home to a concentration of organizations with experience in event programming, transportation coordination, tourism promotion, and visitor services. Collaborative efforts with these entities can enhance public participation, educational programming, and logistical efficiency

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while supporting local economic activity. Allowing vendor participation at public events has historically supported event operations, visitor experience, and engagement with local businesses.

Establishing a framework that allows for public celebration and coordinated community participation ensures that the County is prepared to meaningfully recognize the Semiquincentennial. Today's action seeks to enable a County-led commemoration that reflects San Diego County's historical significance, civic values, and tradition of community engagement.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

The proposed action supports the County of San Diego's 2026-2031 Strategic Plan Community Initiative by encouraging local businesses to respond to contract opportunities based on incentivizing potential vendors located and operating throughout the County.

Respectfully submitted,



JOEL ANDERSON
Supervisor, Second District



JIM DESMOND
Supervisor, Fifth District

ATTACHMENT(S)
N/A