

## Shadow Government In San Bernardino County & Riverside County Schools

### How A Secretive Two-County Legal Consortium Seized Control of Personnel Decisions Affecting 64 School Districts Without Public Knowledge or Board Approval

By Carlos Avalos

For more than a decade, school districts across San Bernardino and Riverside counties have been unknowingly funneling their most sensitive personnel decisions, employee misconduct investigations, labor negotiations, discipline proceedings, and legal settlements through a se-

cretive consortium controlled not by their elected boards, but by two county superintendents and a private law firm.

The organization is called the Inland Personnel Council, or IPC. On paper, it is described as a resource-sharing cooperative for local educational agencies. In practice, documents ob-

tained by the Sentinel and the public reveal it has evolved into something far more powerful: a shadow governance structure that has quietly absorbed authority that California law reserves for independently elected school boards, operating entirely outside the transparency requirements of the state's open

meetings laws.

Now, a cascade of legal challenges, public records disclosures, and a landmark court settlement involving one of IPC's most prominent member districts, Redlands Unified School District, is bringing this hidden architecture into the open. And the picture that emerges raises

serious questions about violations of California and federal law at every level of government.

WHAT IS IPC AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The Inland Personnel Council was established decades ago as a cooperative frame- See P 2

## Use Of Violence Against The Homeless Is Creating Problems For The Sheriff & The County

The sporadically-coordinated and sometimes clashing policy among local governmental officials of intimidating the region's homeless population into making an exodus from San Bernardino County has resulted in some confusing, or at least curiously unexplained, developments involving public entities and officials recently.

One of those pertains

to the vanishing of the woman who for nearly five years has overseen the division of the county that handles the provision of mental health services and averting psychological and psychiatric crises among the general population.

A second relates to a criminal case involving a death threat or death threats being made by a homeless man against

the county sheriff terminating in a guilty plea on a reduced charge, such that a public trial on the matter did not take place. The man was immediately released from custody, whereupon he was charged a week later with a felony parole violation, though authorities maintain they have no knowledge whatsoever with regard to his whereabouts at present. There

are indications that the man's animus toward the sheriff's department stemmed from a beating or beatings he sustained at the hands of deputies for being homeless. Unexpected publicity about his case, however, appears to have triggered another criminal filing against him, such that his anticipated rearrest and re-incarceration will likely render him incom-

municado, keeping the details relating to his beatings from reaching the public at large.

Of the 50 states, California has the highest homeless population. The most recently available reliable statistics, those for 2024, put the number of those without a home in the state at 187,084, which accounted, at that time, for 27.89 percent of the total

See P 5

## District Attorney & County Assessor Draw No Opponents In 2026 Race, Sheriff & Treasurer See Token Challenges

The grip of machine politics on San Bernardino County loomed into stark relief with the close of this year's filing period for the county posts up in the gubernatorial election cycle on March 6

No one came forward to run against Josie Gonzales, who has held that position since she

was sworn in January 6, 2025, after winning a special election held in November 2024 to select Bob Dutton's replacement. Dutton was unopposed in the 2022 race, but died before the term he was elected to in 2018 had fully elapsed. The County appointed a caretaker assessor, Christopher Wilhite,

formerly the assistant assessor for the county, to serve as assessor until after the 2024 special election was held. In San Bernardino county, the assessor also serves as the county recorder.

District Attorney Jason Anderson, who was first elected district attorney in 2018 and was returned to of- See P 3

## Apple Valley Sours On Bodem After A Mere Three Months

Not quite five months after Apple Valley Town officials in glowing terms characterized Todd Bodem as the most impressive of a multitude of applicants considered for the town manager's post and just over three months after he assumed the post, he and the town abruptly parted company this week.

In what was apparently a mutual determination that Bodem did not fit the bill as the top administrator of the 76,613-population town, San Bernardino County's tenth largest city population-wise and its second largest geographically, the 62-year-old journeyman municipal administrator See P 3

## Health Insurance Inflation Outpacing Employee Wage Costs Across Private Sector

By Patty Starr and Craig Kurtzweil,

Employer health benefits costs are rising faster than inflation and wage growth, putting continued pressure on employer-sponsored plans. According to Kaiser Family Foundation's 2025 Employer Health Benefits Survey, per-employee benefit costs increased 6% in 2025, with another 6.5 percent increase pro-

jected for 2026.

New research from the Health Action Council, a nonprofit employer coalition, and UnitedHealthcare show that serious health conditions are appearing earlier in life, particularly among younger employees. The analysis, which analyzed data from more than 225,000 Health Action Council members with UnitedHealthcare plans,

found the following:

Health care claims for younger adults are in-

### Health Issues Are Starting Earlier in the Workforce. Americans Are Getting Sick More Often And Earlier in Life

creasing.

While Millennials and Gen Z still have lower overall health care spending than older generations, their claims are rising at a much

faster pace. Between 2023 and 2025, their year-over-year growth

rate was nearly double that of Baby Boomers. At the same time, younger adults are developing chronic conditions such as diabetes and obesity earlier in life, visiting

emergency rooms more frequently, and engaging with primary care providers less often than any other generation.

Major health events are becoming more common.

Major health events — defined as medical claims exceeding \$100,000 annually — are now about twice as common as they were five years ago. See P 3

## San Bernardino GOP Central Committee Reps At Loggerheads Over Best Opponent To Promote To Overcome Tran

There has been an unanticipated convergence of partisanship and an outcropping of interpersonal tension between two formerly-affiliated members of the San Bernardino City Council just as the candidates in that city's June municipal have come into focus.

It is perhaps too dramatic to state that the character of the city and the county are at stake in how the contretemps between current Councilman Fred Shorett and former Councilman Henry Nickel will be resolved, but whether the 5-to-3 split among the mayor and San Bernardino City Council favoring the Democratic Party reverses to the 5-to-3 balance in favor of the GOP that existed four years ago might hinge on the two amicably settling their differences.

As the county seat and the county's largest city population-wise and its oldest and most mature municipality, the City of San Bernardino remains in many ways a bellwether and a microcosm of San Bernardino County, the largest such jurisdiction geographically in the lower 48 states.

Once the host of Norton Air Force Base, which pumped \$2 billion annually into the local economy, San Bernardino still, moving on to 32 years after

the Department of Defense shuttered the base in 1994, has the highest concentration of governmental See P 3