

# CONTRA COSTA TIMES

ContraCostaTimes.com

## Contra Costa's fifth year of budget cuts draws cries of alarm

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen  
Contra Costa Times

Posted: 04/12/2011 03:02:43 PM PDT

Updated: 04/12/2011 06:40:30 PM PDT

MARTINEZ -- Contra Costa County's 2011-2012 budget -- in its fifth consecutive year of cuts -- has something for everyone to hate.

Despite its unpopularity, the five-member county board of supervisors unanimously endorsed county Administrator David Twa's budget that would cut \$41.2 million, or 3.4 percent, from Contra Costa's \$1.2 billion general fund budget and eliminate 138 county jobs. The board is scheduled to adopt the final document May 3.

Although county department leaders always vigorously lobby the board on behalf of their respective agencies, grim tones and strong rhetoric at a budget hearing Tuesday reflected the pain of persistent reductions at a time when the recession has boosted the demand for public services.

No department was spared although some fared worse than others. Hardest hit are the agencies that receive most of their money from local property and sales taxes, such as fire, sheriff, probation and county prosecutors.

Sheriff David Livingston called the loss of up to 40 deputies catastrophic and warned that his department would severely curtail the number of the incidents it could send officers to.

County Probation Officer Philip Kader said the reductions would leave his department on the verge of failure, and raised the specter of hundreds of youth and adult probationers living unsupervised in the county.

Four fire stations would close. The district attorney's office would no longer enforce its

zero tolerance of domestic violence and would eliminate its crime prevention programs. Foster parents who care for infants exposed to HIV or drug-addicted mothers would lose financial support.

The list goes on and on.

Like most local governments in California and throughout the country, Contra Costa has seen its revenues plummet while the cost of doing business rises. Escalating pension costs, in particular, comprise \$29 million of the nearly \$50 million deficit.

The county may avert some of the more drastic reductions if it is successful in its ongoing contract talks with its employee groups. Contra Costa is seeking wage cuts and increases in employee pension contributions. The county saved \$8.2 million last year through furloughs but Twa said the absences created havoc in departments that operate around the clock, such as law enforcement.

Meanwhile, continued uncertainty over the state budget may leave the county with no choice but to make the cuts no matter what workers agree to give up. About a third of the county's money comes from the state, and legislators have not yet agreed on how to pay for California's \$28 billion budget deficit.

Contact Lisa Vorderbrueggen at 925-945-4773, [IBAbuzz.com/politics](http://IBAbuzz.com/politics) or at [Twitter.com/lvorderbrueggen](http://Twitter.com/lvorderbrueggen).

Fast, convenient,  
AND affordable

Save on select  
Wireless\*  
All-in-Ones,  
Photo Printers  
and Lasers

Save Today

Shop Now >

Limited time offers

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™

Send flowers  
for any occasion  
**Bouquets**  
from **\$19.99**  
+s/h



ProFlowers®  
Offer ONLY available at:  
[proflowers.com/happy](http://proflowers.com/happy)  
or call 1.877.804.1133

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™