



San Bernardino County Mulls Secession From State of California

A large county in Southern California will vote in November on whether they wish to study a possible secession from the State of California. San Bernardino County, which stretches from the Greater Los Angeles area all the way to the Arizona and Nevada border, announced the ballot measure last Wednesday.

San Bernardino County is the largest county by area in the contiguous United States, at over 20,000 square miles. The county is larger than nine states by area and has a population greater than 14 states. It is close in size to West Virginia and in population to New Mexico.

Unlike the [Greater Idaho](#) movement, and the three [Maryland](#) counties who have been considering a move to West Virginia, this secession initiative seems to be more about San Bernardino County feeling it is not getting its fair share of state and federal dollars, rather than a cultural divide.

The question will ask county residents: “Do the citizens of San Bernardino County want the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors to study all options to obtain its fair share of state and federal resources, up to and including secession?”

The ballot measure was approved 4-0 by the county’s Board of Supervisors.

“It’s a question we’re going to put to our residents. Do they want to include all options to go after [the] fight for their fair share of taxpayer dollars?” Supervisor Curt Hagman explained.

Other movements have looked to secede from California or split up the state into smaller states. A 2016 measure looked to split California into six states, and a 2018 attempt to split the state into three states was halted by the state’s Supreme Court.

A [Los Angeles Times](#) editorial published last week concluded that all of the secession movements in California — including the one in San Bernardino County — have their roots in slavery.

“California’s state division movement goes much deeper than the right-wing critique of the current government. Separatism is as old as the state itself. And it’s bound up in California’s history of slavery,” wrote historian Kevin Waite.

While other secession movements in the state have been either culturally or politically motivated, San Bernardino County appears to be mainly concerned that, despite its size, it’s receiving the short end of the stick when it comes to government money. San Bernardino County ranks just 36th out of 56 counties for per-capita revenue received from the state and federal government.

The idea of secession isn’t extremely popular among citizens, with most at the county board meeting strongly against the idea. But county supervisors believe that they must explore all options in order to



County of San Bernardino





Written by [James Murphy](#) on August 9, 2022

properly serve their residents.

"I do think we have to look at anything we can do to enhance services for our residents," said Supervisor Joe Baca, Jr. "I'm not in favor of seceding. I'm proud to be from California. I love California."

"If the worst thing that comes out of this is a study that will be ammunition for our state representatives to fight for more money for us, that would be acceptable," Supervisor Hagman explained.

Despite all the hedging of bets, at least some in the county are tired of Governor Gavin Newsom's policies, the country's highest gas prices, widespread homelessness, and punitive taxation.

Supervisor Janie Rutherford said that California has an "ineffective justice system [and] broken schools," and criticized state government policy from "the state's overreaching counterproductive regulatory schemes, housing and affordability to the ineptness of the state's preparation for this drought."

"People pay high taxes, and they do not believe those taxes are coming back to their neighborhoods to address the problems they're most concerned about," Rutherford said. "That's what we heard from our public last week, and there is nothing crazy at all about being angry about those things."

In San Bernardino County, many residents seem to believe that they're being overlooked in a state whose priorities lie elsewhere.

"San Bernardino is a large county in both terms of size and population, with many pieces of critical infrastructure," accountant Barbara Rodriguez told the *California Globe*. "And the people there are feeling like they are being gipped. Like most counties, they are looking for more money coming in, and seeing their county be so low on the list has really incensed them."

Should the county vote yes on the measure and eventually approve secession, both the California Legislature and the U.S. Congress would need to approve any attempt to become the 51st state.



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