



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**San Diego County Taxpayers Association Announces Finalists for Golden Watchdog & Fleece Awards**

*Added panel discussions on homelessness to include DA Summer Stephan, several area mayors, and city managers*

**San Diego (November 14, 2023)** --- The San Diego County Taxpayers Association (Association) released the list of finalists for its 27th Annual Golden Watchdog and Fleece Awards. The awards recognize the best and worst in public spending, decision-making, and efficiency. Winners will be announced at the Golden awards program on Thursday, November 16th.

The Golden Watchdog and Fleece Awards, nicknamed “the Golden,” will convene community and business leaders, elected officials, and more to applaud good governance and denounce the bad that took place through 2022 and 2023. The nominated policies and programs were submitted to the Association through a public process. The confidential Golden’s Award Committee carefully deliberated each nominee to determine who should earn Fleece or Watchdog awards.

“We’re very excited to recognize the good work done with our hard earned tax dollars, though I want you to know we’re taking a different tack this year,” said Haney Hong, president and CEO. “The Golden Awards program is a great time to acknowledge local government’s biggest achievements and also the flops from the past year. We are also using the opportunity of having community leaders and public policy practitioners from across the region and the political spectrum together to discuss some really important matters in homelessness.”

This year’s program takes three notable departures from the past.

First, this program used to be held earlier in the year, often a month or two off the heels of tax day in April. The Association has moved it to the fall permanently so that in election years, the Association’s recognition of good and bad performance occurs when incumbents and candidates for public office are racing to win or keep public trust.

Second, while accepting and reviewing traditional municipal and educational service nominations, the Association committed to having an award category for the region’s most pressing concerns. This year, the Association sought nominations particularly in housing and homelessness services. San Diego has been named the country’s most unaffordable city, due to exploding housing costs, and the homelessness crisis worsens.



Third, the Association has added a symposium to the program to convene public policy practitioners and public office holders and to discuss the region's most pressing challenge, which is our growing homelessness. The first panel of elected officials, which will include Mayors John McCann (Chula Vista), Esther Sanchez (Oceanside), and Bill Wells (El Cajon) and County District Attorney Summer Stephan, will discuss how the community can build a shared understanding of root causes of homelessness and opportunities to invest in upstream prevention and diversion. The second panel of public administrators, which will include San Diego Chief Operating Officer Eric Dargan and City Managers Maria Kachadoorian (Chula Vista) and Graham Mitchell (El Cajon), will dialogue on ways to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiencies of public investments in homelessness prevention, diversion, and crisis management.

The Association looks forward to announcing the winners this Thursday, November 16th, 2:30-7:30pm, at The Lane on the harbor waterfront. Tickets are available online at <https://auctria.events/27thAnnualGoldenAwards>.

The finalists for this year:

**Golden Watchdog Award in Homelessness Services**

Urban Street Angels - Expansion of Short-term and Bridge Housing  
San Diego Rescue Mission - Oceanside Navigation Center  
Father Joe's Villages - Saint Teresa Calcutta Permanent Supportive Housing  
Serving Seniors - Landing Bridge Shelter

**Golden Watchdog Award in Municipal and Education Services**

County of San Diego - Partner Relay Program  
Helix Water District - Tunnel Hill Tanks Rehabilitation Project  
San Diego County Office of Education - Development of Educational Materials  
on Antisemitism and Islamophobia  
San Diego Unified School District and The San Diego Foundation - Level Up SD

**Public-Private Partnership Award**

City of San Diego and Downtown San Diego Partnership - Clean & Safe Program  
County of San Diego and many others - Homelessness Diversion and Prevention  
San Diego Housing Commission and Affirmed Housing - Tizon Housing Development  
San Diego County Sheriff's Department and many others - Inmate Reentry Program

**Golden Fleece Award**

City of San Diego Public Utilities Department - Withholding of water bills, failure to notify residents  
Regional Task Force on Homelessness - Lack of Transparency and Unwillingness to Share Data  
San Diego Unified School District - iHigh Shutdown  
San Diego Unified School District & Sweetwater Union High School District - Data Breaches



### **Media Watchdog Award**

Alberto Garcia and Art Castanares, La Prensa

Jeff Light, former editor-in-chief, San Diego Union Tribune

Jeff McDonald, San Diego Union Tribune

### **Goldens 2023 Event Details**

Date: November 16, 2023

Time: 2:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Location: 900 Bayfront Ct Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92101

Tickets Still Available at <https://auctria.events/27thAnnualGoldenAwards>

### **ABOUT THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION**

The San Diego County Taxpayers Association (SDCTA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, dedicated to promoting accountable, cost-effective and efficient government and opposing unnecessary new taxes and fees. For the last 78 years, SDCTA has served as “*San Diego’s Taxpayer Watchdog Group*” by educating the public and helping to save the region’s citizens millions of dollars. Public opinion polls consistently rate SDCTA as the most “influential” and “trusted” public policy institution in San Diego. The membership is led by President & CEO Haney Hong. SDCTA envisions a future where San Diego citizens receive a better return on investment in public assets and services. For more information, please visit [www.sdcta.org](http://www.sdcta.org), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or call 619-234-6423..