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Sanders' budget choices favor consultants over pools and libraries

The line-item veto announced by San Diego Mayor Jerry Sanders late Monday eliminates funding for city parks, libraries, swimming pools and graffiti control, while restoring more than \$600,000 for consultants and retaining unneeded surpluses.

"There's no excuse for balancing the budget by eliminating needed services when inflated consulting costs could be cut instead," said Murtaza Baxamusa, Research and Policy Director of the Center on Policy Initiatives. "The people of San Diego need these services far more than they need overpriced consultants and excessive slush funds."

Sanders is seeking to reverse a city council budget decision that followed the recommendations of the City's Independent Budget Analyst, Andrea Tevlin. Tevlin and her staff determined that the city could restore many services such as pool and library hours and parks maintenance by tapping three sources of revenue:

- Reduce unnecessary funding for an audit consultant and a managed competition consultant by a total of \$625,000.
- Use the leftover balance of \$1.5 million in the Environmental Growth Fund, which is intended for activities such as park maintenance that enhance San Diego's environment.
- Increase by \$2.5 million the 2009 loan repayment to the city from the fund used for the ballpark construction. The city had loaned the Redevelopment Agency \$100 million to build the downtown ballpark. Sanders proposes a first payment of \$5 million, while Tevlin said it should be \$7.5 million.

By vetoing the use of these funds, Sanders is proposing to cut services in the following areas:

- Supervision at skate park sites,
- Librarians, library assistants and cleaning of libraries,
- Weekend camping at Kumeyaay Campground,
- Grounds maintenance at community parks,
- Year-round operation for all 13 city swimming pools
- Staffing the lifeguard station at Children's Pool
- Supportive personnel for police investigations
- Street maintenance

Baxamusa, who was honored by the city council today with the declaration of June 17, 2008, as Dr. Murtaza H. Baxamusa Day, said he hopes the council will override the Mayor's veto.

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