



## San Diegans Form Stimulus Watchdog Group

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***By Lynn Stuart***

The federal stimulus dollars aren't even here and many locals are already concerned it won't be spent properly.

"Money comes so quickly. People get in their silos and people start to siphon it off," says Shelia Jackson of the San Diego Unified School District's Board.

Shelia Jackson and other community leaders have come together to form a coalition asking for accountability for how the stimulus money is spent. "We're asking for transparency. We're asking to be part of the conversation as to how these monies are going to be spent."

Of the 127 million dollars earmarked as federal highway stimulus funds for the San Diego area, about 60% is going to highway projects. The rest will be divided between the 18 cities in the region.

"We're not regulators, we're the people who watch the regulators," says Rabbi Laurie Coskey of the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice.

The coalition wants more than transparency. It wants to make sure the people who are hired to do the jobs are locals who will make a living wage.

"They are moneys that come from the public and these moneys should go to the well being of the community and poverty jobs or jobs without health care don't help the community in the short run or the long run and that's what we are watching."

More money is expected to come from the state's share of the stimulus money. But it's unclear how those millions will be divided.

"The closer to home people are making these proposals the better directed and targeted that money will be. So we do count on local school board members and health clinics to tell us what do they need and how to direct those funds," says State Assemblywoman Lori Saldana.

The coalition has it's work cut out for it. The sheer number of projects vying for the stimulus money can be difficult to follow, much less keeping track of the quality of the jobs that would be offered to complete the projects. Regardless, state lawmakers say the stimulus money should be at work in San Diego by late Spring or Summer.