



MERCED SUN-STAR

Fresno Unified plans \$39.8M budget cut for 2026-27

BY LEQI ZHONG lzhong@fresnobee.com

Fresno Unified School District plans to make the largest budget cut in recent history for the 2026-27 fiscal year, amounting to \$39.8 million and a cut of about 450 positions.

The positions on the chopping block include 308.2 full-time equivalent school site positions, including teachers, school liaisons, and campus safety assistants, and 141.3 classified employee positions, including project managers, customer service representatives, and nutrition services assistants, according to the district's budget presentation on Wednesday.

Patrick Jensen, the district's chief financial officer, said the reduction is due to the district's shrinking enrollment, which created fewer demand for teachers and staff. He also said there won't be actual layoffs. Instead, employees who lose their positions will be reassigned to vacant roles. The alternative vacancy, however, might exist in different departments or at different compensation levels.

Jensen said the exact count of filled positions to be terminated is not known at this time, as the "bumping" process is still underway. "Bumping" means the employee with the greater seniority, or more years of service, whose jobs have been cut, is allowed to displace less-senior colleagues so they can remain employed.

The eliminated positions include vacant roles and employees who took early retirement in December, district officials said.

The exhaustion of one-time grants during the pandemic and years of shrinking enrollment has led to consecutive budget shortfalls for Fresno Unified. After its budget peaked at \$2.3 billion in the 2023-24 school year, the district has imposed reductions of \$26 million and \$34.9 million in the last two years, respectively.

SEE BUDGET, 2A

Fresno's fifth Amazon warehouse sparks job debate

BY ERIK GALICIA egalicia@fresnobee.com

The massive industrial space under construction on Marks and Nielsen avenues that will host Fresno's fifth Amazon warehouse did not come without some controversy.

It was approved by the City Council in 2024 under the promise of good jobs — and lots of them.

Skeptics of the development, named the Scannell Westgate Industrial Center, warn that increasing automation will mean fewer jobs at Amazon's Fresno operations. That includes City Councilmember Miguel Arias, who says allowing additional warehouse space on the west side — the city's most polluted area and one in need of more retail and grocery options — was unnecessary.

"I'd rather the Amazons of the world take an existing distribution center or an existing



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A giant warehouse is shown under construction on the northeast corner of Marks and Nielsen in west Fresno.

warehouse in this city and renovate that," said Arias, whose district includes the new warehouse site.

But Amazon says its track record shows a huge investment in Fresno, and that it can use robotics and create plenty of jobs at the same time.

"Fresno is a great place to

live and work and we're proud to be growing our local footprint," Amazon spokesperson Austin Stowe said in a statement to The Fresno Bee.

Stowe said the operation at Westgate will not be a fulfillment center, which is the company's largest type of warehouse. But it's not yet clear how

many new jobs the new operation will create or how much of the 833,000 square feet of the industrial center's planned building space Amazon will use.

The company will share more information about its future operation at Westgate as it becomes available, Stowe added.

Developed by Indiana-based Scannell Properties, construction on Westgate began last summer. Scannell did not respond to The Fresno Bee's request for comment, but it appears the first of three buildings planned for the 48-acre site is nearing completion.

WHAT IS AMAZON'S CURRENT FOOTPRINT IN FRESNO?

Stowe said Amazon has invested "more than \$4 billion" in Fresno County. The company currently has four operations

SEE AMAZON, 3A



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Republican gubernatorial candidate Steve Hilton speaks during the California Republican Party's launch of Victory '26 at the California Republican Party headquarters in Sacramento on Wednesday, June 3, 2026.

Merced County leans Republican in governor primary

BY JOHN HOLLAND jholland@modbee.com

Merced County has 9% more registered Democrats than Republicans, but the GOP did better here in Tuesday's primary for California governor.

That's mainly because 23% of the registered voters in Merced County have no stated party. They can swing right or left depending on the election, as shown in the early results from Tuesday.

This will not change the fact that a Democrat will likely

become the next governor of the deep blue state of California. The Merced County numbers nonetheless can indicate the mood of the local electorate.

The top two primary candidates will advance to the November general election, regardless of party. Here's where the count stood as of Thursday morning:

- Republican Steve Hilton led statewide for governor with 27.6%, but he got 31% of the Merced County votes.
- Democrat Xavier Becerra had

25.5% statewide and 22% in Merced County.

- Democrat Tom Steyer received 19.7% statewide and 16.8% in Merced County.
- Republican Chad Bianco was at 11.3% statewide and 17.6% in Merced County.

The party registration figures for Merced County are in a May 18 report from the California Secretary of State's Office. Democrats make up 39.5% of the Merced County electorate to 30.1% who are Republicans. An additional 23% are independent, and the rest are minor

parties.

Democrats are at 44.9% of the California total. Republicans are at 25% and independents at 22.8%. The other 7.3% belong to minor parties.

Republicans outperformed in nearly every state race in Merced County. The lone exception was the race for California Treasurer, where Democrat Anna Caballero, a popular state senator representing Merced, topped all vote-getters with 31%.

The Merced Sun-Star's Jim Silva contributed to this report.

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