

Headline: County board approves pay hikes
Date: 7/23/2013 9:00:00 PM
Media Contact: Sewell, Abby
Media Outlet: Los Angeles Times

With Los Angeles County government's revenue on the mend, the Board of Supervisors approved the first pay hike in five years for sheriff's deputies and probation officers.

The agreements, which the board passed unanimously and without discussion, will provide a 6% raise in three increments of 2% between this month and January 2015 for more than 9,000 sworn personnel in the Sheriff's Department and more than 4,000 in probation.

The board approved a similar pay hike for county firefighters, lifeguards and investigators with the public defender's office last month and also agreed last month to lift a hiring freeze that had been in place for all departments.

The county avoided layoffs during the recession through hiring and salary freezes that affected most of the county's approximately 101,000 employees. Public safety employees have not received a raise since August 2008, while other county employees have gone without increases since January 2009.

Officials have credited fiscal restraint and cooperation from employee unions as major factors in helping the county weather the recession without major service cuts, sometimes drawing a comparison to the city of Los Angeles, which agreed in 2007 to 25% pay raises for thousands of employees over five years. The city cut tree trimming, street repairs and other services in recent years, and laid off 360 employees.

But county employee unions stepped up pressure for pay increases this year, as the county's tax revenues rebounded to help balance a nearly \$25-billion budget.

His members "made some real sacrifices over these past few years," said Ralph Miller, president of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 685, which represents probation officers. "They helped the county weather the financial storm."

The 6% raise will amount to about \$292 a month for the typical probation officer, and about \$375 a month for the average sheriff's deputy.

Floyd Hayhurst, president of the Assn. for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, said the raise "has been a long time coming." The union is continuing to push for funding to restore staffing to pre-recession levels and for an end to blocks on overtime.

The county supervisors have accused Sheriff Lee Baca of overspending and not using some funding for the intended purposes. The sheriff has complained that his department was hamstrung by deep budget cuts during the recession.

County spokesman Dave Sommers said the county has the funds to cover the pay hikes, but he could not provide an estimate of the total cost Tuesday.

"These are very modest increases," he said. "We are confident the ongoing revenues are there to cover the increase, thanks to an improving economic base."

Non-public safety employees are still in contract talks and pushing for pay increases and for the county to hire more social workers and hospital staff.

--