

**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

426



FROM: Executive Office

January 20, 2011

SUBJECT: Claim for Reward in Esperanza Fire Investigation/Prosecution

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors : 1) Authorize a \$50,000 payment to Claimant Doe for information that assisted in the conviction of Raymond Lee Oyler for setting the Esperanza Fire; and 2) Approve and direct the Auditor-Controller to make the following budget adjustment.

Decrease Appropriations 10000-1109000000-581000 Contingency \$50,000
Increase Appropriations 10000-1101000000-521180 Witness Misc. \$50,000

BACKGROUND: On Oct. 26, 2006 an arsonist set a fire southeast of Cabazon on Esperanza Avenue. Pushed by strong winds, the blaze burned thousands of acres and killed five U.S. Forest Service firefighters. On Oct. 31, 2006 the Board of Supervisors approved a reward offer of up to \$100,000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person(s) responsible for setting the Esperanza Fire.

Background: (Continued on Page 2)

Raymond Smith
Raymond Smith, Public Information Officer

FINANCIAL DATA	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$50,000	In Current Year Budget:	No
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$50,000	Budget Adjustment:	Yes
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$ -0-	For Fiscal Year:	2010/11

SOURCE OF FUNDS: Contingency	Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Requires 4/5 Vote	X

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE
BY: *Bill Luna*
County Executive Office Signature

FISCAL PROCEDURES APPROVED
 PAUL ANGULO, CPA, AUDITOR-CONTROLLER
 BY: *Samuel Wong* 1/27/11
 SAMUEL WONG

Policy X
 Consent

Dept Recomm.: Approve
 Per Exec. Ofc.: Approve

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Background: (Continued)

Raymond Lee Oyler of Beaumont was arrested for setting the blaze, convicted of murder in Riverside County Superior Court and sentenced to death in June 2009.

A witness for the prosecution has filed a claim for the reward the Board of Supervisors offered. An attorney for the witness – who has reported being harassed and ostracized for testifying in the case – has asked that his client be identified publicly only as Claimant Doe. The claimant's identity has been verified but this report does not identify the witness to help protect the person's privacy and safety.

Early in December, the Executive Office met with Deputy District Attorney Michael Hestrin, who prosecuted Oyler, and representatives of the Riverside County Sheriff's Department and Riverside County Fire Department who worked on the fire investigation. Mr. Hestrin explained that the witness' testimony was an important piece of the prosecution's case because it described how Oyler had sought help in scouting a location to set a fire. The testimony also, among other things, established Oyler's intent to start the blaze in the same area where the fire eventually was set.

At the conclusion of the meeting in December, the prosecutor and investigators recommended that Claimant Doe be awarded approximately \$50,000 of the \$100,000 reward the Board of Supervisors offered.