



Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR

June 25, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager

Submitted by: Sharon Friedrichsen, Budget Manager

Subject: Voluntary Time Off Program for Fiscal Year 2025

INTRODUCTION

As a citywide cost-saving measure, the City Manager is designating 16 Voluntary Time Off (VTO) days in Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025) and authorizing certain City offices and non-essential services to temporarily close for those days.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The proposed 16 VTO dates will fall on a schedule similar to Fiscal Year 2024, with City offices generally closing on every second Friday, with additional days the last week in December 2024 (December 23 - December 27). The following are the proposed VTO Days:

Date (2024)	Day	Date (2025)	Day
July 12	Friday	January 10	Friday
August 9	Friday	February 14	Friday
September 13	Friday	March 14	Friday
October 11	Friday	April 11	Friday
November 5*	Tuesday	May 9	Friday
December 13	Friday	June 13	Friday
December 23	Monday		
December 24	Tuesday		
December 26	Thursday		
December 27	Friday		
10 days (2024)		6 days (2025)	

* VTO day in November is moved to Tuesday, November 5, due to 2024 Election day.

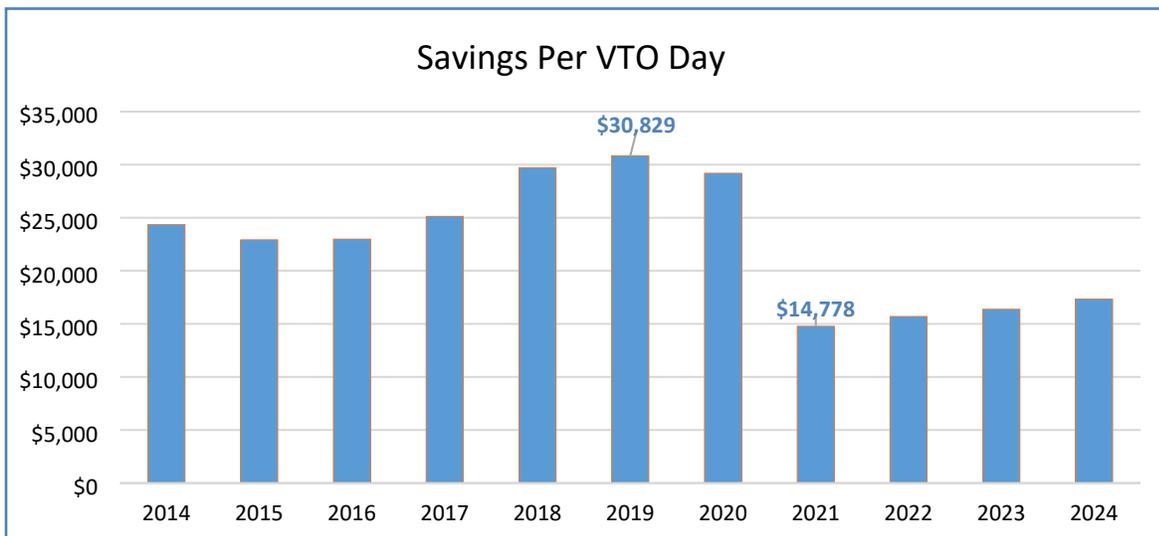
The purpose of VTO days is to generate savings to help balance the budget. The program is projected to achieve a savings of \$277,427 on an all funds basis in Fiscal Year 2024. The actual savings per VTO day since FY 2021 was lower than previous fiscal years because of city building closure and staff working remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hybrid schedule for City employees is still in effect to date. Nonetheless, the program is still recommended to continue in Fiscal Year 2025.

Voluntary Time Off Salary Savings

Fiscal Year	Number of VTO Days	Base Salary Savings	Savings Per VTO Day
2014	16	\$ 389,706	\$ 24,357
2015	16	\$ 366,853	\$ 22,928
2016	16	\$ 367,821	\$ 22,989
2017	16	\$ 402,070	\$ 25,129
2018	16	\$ 475,400	\$ 29,713
2019	17	\$ 524,086	\$ 30,829
2020	16	\$ 467,108	\$ 29,194
2021	17	\$ 251,229	\$ 14,778
2022	16	\$ 251,148	\$ 15,697
2023	16	\$ 261,628	\$ 16,352
2024	16	\$ * 277,427	\$ 17,339

*Annualized projection

The VTO program is recommended to continue in Fiscal Year 2025 and will be reevaluated at a later time to determine whether the VTO program will also be implemented in Fiscal Year 2026. As shown in the chart below, the average savings per VTO day within the last decade ranged from \$14,800 to \$30,800.



In Fiscal Year 2024, staff considered the impact that the VTO days had on City services. It was determined that the VTO days were, in general, not having a significant detrimental effect on the City's ability to provide quality services. Potential inconveniences to residents were mitigated in several ways, including keeping the 311 Customer Call Center open on VTO days, adjusting due dates for fines, and posting clear signs in advance of closure dates.

BACKGROUND

The concept for a VTO program was proposed in 2004 by the labor unions representing non-sworn employees as an alternative to a mandatory closure of City offices ("furloughs") and staff layoffs. The VTO program designates certain days City offices are closed to the public while allowing staff to take paid or unpaid leave, or voluntarily report to work. The VTO closures have permitted staff to reduce their vacation leave balances, and eliminate the costly past practice of buying back vacation leave balances, which in turn has allowed the City to reduce its cost to pay out accrued vacation leave upon an employee's separation from employment. It has also been used by departments to help them reach their annual target savings.

Likewise, the City Council approved a recommendation that designates any Statewide Election, including Primary and Special Statewide Elections, as VTO days¹. Election Day occurs on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November of each even-numbered year, with the corresponding Primary Day occurring on the Tuesday after the first Monday of March.

Service Impacts: The VTO program has generated minimal complaints from the public regarding the office closures and reduced services because many key services remain open to the public, while other services can be provided on a callback basis.

During VTO days, customer service counters at the Finance Customer Service Center and Permit Service Center are closed to the public. When Customer Service Center offices are closed, customers may access the drop box which is located outside 1947 Center building. Customers are redirected to access the drop box through signage to the Rent Board Office at 2125 Milvia Street on VTO days in the last week of December. When the Permit Service Center is closed, building inspection services continue to be available to the public when City approvals are required for time-sensitive projects. The permit mailbox has been configured to accept emails from applicants on VTO days including applications for all types of building related permits. In addition, Permit Service Center cashiers work most of the VTO days to return customer calls and process payments. The City will continue to notify the public of City VTO closure dates through public noticing, the press, voicemail messages, and signage.

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https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AflClpxxSiesVU%C3%81UeV6uHvDcSM347Ko0EvBQfWOAcMZctkvZVLhegoOT5Gsbt38OjQY6FVXdfzeliGPO5gabOg4=

The Voluntary Time Off Program for Fiscal Year 2025 is a Strategic Plan Priority, advancing our goal to provide an efficient and financially-healthy City government.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

VTO days may reduce vehicle miles traveled associated with City employees' work commute. Otherwise, there are no identifiable environmental and climate effects or opportunities associated with the subject of this report.

POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

We are continuing the VTO program in Fiscal Year 2025. However, the City Manager will reassess the economic impact as well as the cost benefit to the public of continuing these temporary closures of City offices for Fiscal Year 2026.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE ACTION

Cost savings are achieved on an annual basis from the VTO program. Since Fiscal Year 2014, annual cost savings ranging from \$251,000 to \$524,000 have been achieved from the VTO program.

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