



Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR

June 24, 2025

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager
 Submitted by: David White, Deputy City Manager
 Subject: Voluntary Time Off Program for Fiscal Year 2026

INTRODUCTION

As a citywide cost-saving measure, the City Manager is designating 16 Voluntary Time Off (VTO) days in Fiscal Year 2026 (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026) 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 2025, with City offices generally closing on every second Friday, with additional days the last week in December 2025 (December 22 - December 26). The following are the proposed VTO Days:

Date (2025)	Day	Date (2026)	Day
July 11	Friday	January 9	Friday
August 8	Friday	February 13	Friday
September 12	Friday	March 13	Friday
October 10	Friday	April 10	Friday
November 7*	Friday	May 8	Friday
December 12	Friday	June 12	Friday
December 22	Monday		
December 23	Tuesday		
December 24	Wednesday		
December 26	Friday		
	10 days (2025)		6 days (2026)

* VTO day in November is moved to November 7 to minimize the impact on payroll processing.

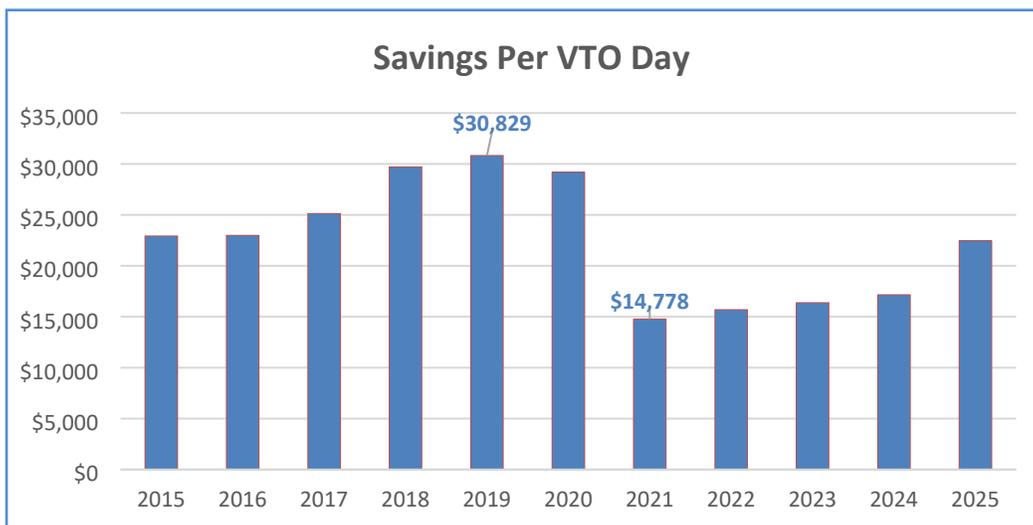
The purpose of VTO days is to generate savings to help balance the budget. The program is projected to achieve a savings of \$359,231 for all funds in Fiscal Year 2025. Since FY 2021, the actual savings per VTO day have been lower compared to previous fiscal years, primarily due to the closure of City facilities and the implementation of remote work arrangements. A hybrid work schedule for City employees remains in place. Nonetheless, the program is still recommended to continue in Fiscal Year 2026.

Voluntary Time Off Salary Savings

Fiscal Year	Number of VTO Days	Base Salary Savings	Savings Per VTO Day
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	\$ 274,582	\$ 17,161
2025	16	\$ *359,231	\$ 22,452

*Annualized projection

The VTO program is recommended to continue in Fiscal Year 2026 and will be reevaluated at a later time to determine whether the VTO program will also be implemented in Fiscal Year 2027. 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 2025, 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 that 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 the 1947 Center Street 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 2026 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

The City is continuing the VTO program in Fiscal Year 2026. 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 2027.

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.

CONTACT PERSON

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