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April 2, 2026

Supreme Court of California
350 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: *Attorney General of the State of California v. S.C. (Bianco)*, Case No. S295901 and *Cervantes v. Bianco*, Case No. S295866 – Amicus Letter in Support of Petitions

Honorable Justices:

Pursuant to rule 8.500(g) of the California Rules of Court, the League of United Latin American Citizens (“LULAC”) respectfully submits this amicus letter in support of the Attorney General of California’s Petition for Writ of Mandate and the Cervantes Parties’ Petition for Writ of Mandate. For the reasons set forth in the Petitions, below, and in other amicus letters in support, the Court should proceed expeditiously and grant the writ of mandate in one or both cases. LULAC submits this amicus letter in support of both cases given the importance of this case to protecting the rights of its members, California voters, and Riverside County voters in particular.

Background

On February 26, 2026, Riverside County Sheriff and Republican candidate for Governor of California Chad Bianco executed a search warrant and seized nearly 1,000 boxes of ballots and election materials from the November 2025 special election for California Proposition 50.¹ On March 24, 2026, Sheriff Bianco seized an additional 426 boxes of materials.² Sheriff Bianco claimed that a group of private citizens had conducted an “audit” of the special election results in the county, and alleged that the election workers’ tally of ballots received was 45,000 fewer than the number of votes certified to the state.³ Riverside County’s registrar told the County Board of Supervisors at a presentation weeks earlier that he had met with the same group to address their concerns.⁴ The registrar further reported that the group used imprecise, handwritten records in its

¹ *California sheriff running for governor seizes more than a half million ballots from 2025 election*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Mar. 22, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/california-ballot-seizure-bianco-bonta-election-68754a307394ca3c90ec627ce4e3e4fa> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

² Maya Yang, *California sheriff seizes more ballot materials in defiance of state officials*, THE GUARDIAN (Mar. 27, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/mar/27/chad-bianco-california-ballots-voter-fraud> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

³ Jane C. Timm, *California GOP sheriff who's running for governor seizes ballots from 2025 election* (Mar. 22, 2026), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/elections/california-gop-sheriff-running-governor-seizes-ballots-2025-election-rcna264710> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

⁴ *Id.*

audit, which elections officials do not use.⁵ The Sheriff’s actions were in contravention of directives issued by the Attorney General.⁶ The exact contents of the seized boxes are unclear, and the materials remain in the Sheriff’s custody.

Statement of Interest

LULAC is the largest and oldest Latino civil rights organization in the United States with over 535 councils nationwide and over 570,000 members and supporters.⁷ Founded in 1929, LULAC’s mission is to improve the lives of Latino families throughout the United States and to protect their civil rights, including their voting rights.⁸

The California State Council of LULAC (“California LULAC”) has over 40,000 members across the state and 28 local councils. LULAC of Riverside (“Riverside LULAC”) and LULAC Veterans of Southern California (“Veterans LULAC,” and, collectively, “Riverside Area LULACs”) are councils which have members who live in Riverside County. Riverside LULAC has approximately forty members and Veterans LULAC has twelve members, approximately five of whom live in Riverside County.

Helping voters register to vote is a core activity of LULAC.⁹ LULAC councils help register their Latino members and non-member constituents at parks, supermarkets, and other public places in the barrios, as well as at naturalization ceremonies, churches, college campuses, and Hispanic heritage events such as Cinco de Mayo and Day of the Dead. Veterans LULAC assists servicemembers in understanding voter registration requirements when they are going overseas.

LULAC, California LULAC, and the Riverside Area LULACs have a strong interest in these cases and submit that the Attorney General has the power to exercise his supervisory authority over this unlawful action. Sheriff Bianco’s seizure of ballots and election materials also represents an extraordinary and illegal action that will erode LULAC’s members’ confidence in the electoral process and have a chilling effect on members in Riverside County and beyond.

I. The Attorney General of California exercising supervisory authority under the California state law will protect the public, including LULAC members.

The Constitution of the State of California provides that the Attorney General “shall have direct supervision over every . . . sheriff . . . in all matters pertaining to the duties of their respective

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Pet. for Writ of Mandate & Other Extraordinary Relief & Req. for Expedited Rev. at 12, *Att’y Gen. of Cal., Rob Bonta v. Bianco*, No. E088096 (Cal. Ct. App. Mar. 23, 2026).

⁷ <https://lulac.org/about/> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

⁸ See <https://lulac.org/about/history/> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

⁹ <https://lulac.org/gotv/turn-your-power-on/> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

offices[.]” Cal. Const., art. V, § 13. California state law implements this directive, stating the following:

The Attorney General has direct supervision over the sheriffs of the several counties of the state, and may require of them written reports concerning the investigation, detection, and punishment of crime in their respective jurisdictions. Whenever the Attorney General deems it necessary in the public interest the Attorney General shall direct the activities of any sheriff relative to the investigation or detection of crime within the jurisdiction of the sheriff, and may direct the service of subpoenas, warrants of arrest, or other processes of court in connection therewith.

Cal. Gov. Code, § 12560. *See also Venegas v. County of Los Angeles*, 32 Cal.4th 820, 834 (2004) (“Section 12560 gives the Attorney General ‘direct supervision’ of all sheriffs, with power to order reports ‘concerning the investigation, detection and punishment of crime in their respective jurisdictions,’ and to direct their activities regarding these investigations.”).

Viewed together, these provisions allow the Attorney General to exercise his supervisory powers where the Attorney General “deems it necessary in the public interest.” To be clear, this does not give the Attorney General unbounded authority over the routine functioning of constitutional officers such as sheriffs. This authority is for unusual circumstances. But here, LULAC believes public interest factors necessitate the Attorney General’s intervention given the circumstances we detail below. They include the extraordinary and unlawful nature of Sheriff Bianco’s seizure, the grave harm to public confidence in elections, and the chilling effect on LULAC’s membership and California voters writ large. Accordingly, LULAC urges this Court to allow the Attorney General to validly exercise his supervisory powers in this case.

II. Failure to follow California Election Code procedures erodes LULAC members’ confidence in the electoral process.

A. Public trust in election procedures is essential to the functioning of our democracy.

The stability of democracy depends on public trust in the legitimacy of elections. *See, e.g., Purcell v. Gonzalez*, 549 U.S. 1, 7 (2006) (“[C]onfidence in the integrity of our electoral processes is essential to the functioning of our participatory democracy[.]”); *Crawford v. Marion Cnty. Election Bd.*, 553 U.S. 181, 197 (2008) (“[P]ublic confidence in the integrity of the electoral process has independent significance, because it encourages citizen participation in the democratic process.”); *Hardeman v. Thomas*, 208 Cal. App. 3d 153, 194 (Ct. App. 1989) (“[P]reservation of the integrity of the election process is far more important in the long run than resolution of any one particular election.” (quoting *Fair v. Harnandez*, 116 Cal. App. 3d 868, 881 (1981))).

Clear procedures and rules related to election administration—like those promulgated and adopted in California—build public trust in election outcomes by promoting transparency.¹⁰

¹⁰ *See* Brendan Nyhan et al., *Communicating with Voters to Build Trust in the U.S. Election System*, <https://electionlab.mit.edu/research/projects/mapping-election-science/white->

Without judicial redress, Sheriff Bianco’s actions jeopardize trust and confidence in California elections and further embolden those across the United States who abuse law enforcement authority to diminish confidence in election results and deprive citizens of their voting rights.

B. *Sheriff Bianco’s seizure of election materials violates applicable law and jeopardizes LULAC’s and the public’s confidence in California elections.*

California has codified procedures related to the counting and handling of ballots. *See, e.g.*, Cal. Elec. Code § 15101 (relating to the processing and counting of absentee ballots); Cal. Elec. Code § 15102 (relating to the counting of absentee ballots), Cal. Elec. Code § 15109 (specifying the method for counting absentee ballots shall be the same as that for ballots cast in polling places); Cal. Elec. Code § 15630 (providing for recount measures and prohibiting touching of ballot or photography of personally-identifying information); Cal. Elec. Code § 15370 (permitting only limited reopening of counted and sealed ballots); and, importantly, Cal. Elec. Code § 15551 (providing that “[i]n no event shall the package [containing voted ballots] or contents be taken from the custody of the elections official.”).

These laws and prescriptive procedures help instill public confidence and transparency regarding election processes and, as California Election statutes, have the power of law. But Sheriff Bianco’s seizure of ballot materials does exactly the opposite, weakening trust in the election system for LULAC’s members and for all California voters.

Sheriff Bianco’s now-unfettered access to Riverside County ballots and election materials jeopardizes ballot secrecy, something on which the California Legislature placed paramount importance when enacting § 15370 of the California Elections Code. *See* Cal. Elec. Code § 15370 (“After ballots are counted and sealed, the elections official may not open any ballots nor permit any ballots to be opened except as permitted in Sections 15303 and 15304, or in the event of a recount.”)

By seizing ballots and election materials in February and March of 2026, Sheriff Bianco entirely ignored California constitutional precedent requiring that “[v]oting shall be secret[.]” Cal.

[papers/voter-trust](#) (last visited Apr. 1, 2026) (explaining that “even voters who have positive personal [voting] experiences may [] make inferences about the quality of an election from election rules and regulations[.]”); Lonna Rae Atkeson et al., *The Costs of Voting and Voter Confidence*, 78 POL. RSCH. Q. 1, 23 (2025)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/10659129241283169> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026) (finding “[c]onfidence in the outcome of elections may not emanate simply from . . . the voting experience, but from the knowledge . . . that the voter’s respective state has taken the necessary steps to assure voters have access to the ballot and that the ballot is secure from fraudulent voting.”); Michael Caudell-Feagan, *How to Restore Trust in Elections*, TREND, Oct. 2024, <https://www.pew.org/en/trend/archive/fall-2024/how-to-restore-trust-in-elections>, (last visited Apr. 1, 2026) (“Given the trust voters have in elections closest to them,” elite messaging “about the mechanics of voting, the tabulation process, and security measures can go a long way.”)

Const. art. II, § 7,¹¹ and judicial precedent holding that California “[b]allots are expressly protected from disclosure by statute.” *Citizens Oversight, Inc. v. Vu*, 35 Cal. App. 5th 612, 619 (2019). Such blatant disregard for voting rights, the rule of law, and the state constitution is untenable; these violations are particularly threatening when carried out under color of law by a politically motivated law enforcement authority acting only based on conspiracy theory.

C. *Sheriff Bianco’s seizures fuel conspiracy theories, suggest selective enforcement of laws, and erode the perception of neutral election administration.*

Allowing baseless conspiracy theories to disrupt proper post-election administration, while ignoring codified ballot retention standards for an already-certified election, suggests selective enforcement of laws and gives special credence to rampant election conspiracy theories suggesting that the outcome of California elections is predetermined. Baseless conspiracy theories can, as here, contravene the purpose of even-handed, party-neutral election administration.¹² When that happens, particularly under color of legal authority, it should not go without redress.

Sheriff Bianco had other options for seeking clarity about Riverside County’s November 2025 special election results. California has enacted robust legislation regarding the counting, potential recounting, and retention of cast ballots. *See* Cal. Const. art. II, § 2.5; Cal. Elec. Code § 15702 (“For purposes of Section 2.5 of Article II of the California Constitution, ‘vote’ includes . . . having the ballot counted properly and included in the appropriate totals of votes cast.”); *see also* Cal. Elec. Code §§ 15610, 15645, 16100 (governing disputes over elections results and recount procedures). Despite this, Sheriff Bianco—one ostensibly charged with enforcing California law—did not seek redress under any of these provisions, and forged his own self remedy, the purposes of which are unclear now that the conspiracy theory spurring him on has been shown to be false. Self-selection of which sections of the California Elections Code are to be regarded and ignored

¹¹ *See also* Cal. Const. art I, § 1 (“All people are by nature free and independent and have inalienable rights. Among these are enjoying and defending life and liberty, acquiring, possessing, and protecting property, and pursuing and obtaining safety, happiness, and *privacy*.” (emphasis added)).

¹² *See* Marcella Amaral, et al., *Do Conspiracy Theories Undermine Support for Democracy?*, POL. BEHAV. (Mar. 6, 2026), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-026-10130-1> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026) (“Participants exposed to [conspiracy theories] were less likely to trust elections and more reluctant to accept their results. This aligns with previous research linking [conspiracy theories] to decreased perceptions of electoral integrity and resistance to election outcomes.”); *see also* Benjamin A. Lyons & Kaitlyn S. Workman, *Research note: Explicit voter fraud conspiracy cues increase belief among co-partisans but have broader spillover effects on confidence in elections*, 3 HARV. KENNEDY SCH. MISINFORMATION REV., 1, 3 (June 2022), <https://perma.cc/7Q9N-SQR7> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026) (“explicitly stated partisan conspiracy theories increased conspiracy beliefs among co-partisans and decreased confidence in elections regardless of their agreement with the respondent’s partisanship.”).

by a sworn constitutional officer, or anyone else, cannot stand, particularly when it jeopardizes the public’s interest in free and fair elections.

Allowing Sheriff Bianco and his cohort to retain election materials and recount certified ballots (by involving a yet-to-be-named special master or otherwise) endangers the principle that “all qualified voters have the right to vote and to have their vote counted equally with other individual qualified voters in the same electoral unit.” *Election Integrity Project Cal., Inc. v. Weber*, 113 F.4th 1072, 1087 (9th Cir. 2024). This may be precisely what Sheriff Bianco seeks.

Sheriff Bianco’s seizures are especially intimidating for Riverside County’s 52.5% majority Hispanic or Latino population,¹³ many of whom are U.S. citizens. Much of Riverside County’s Latino population is already concerned about engaging in any activity that requires interaction with government officials, for fear that such activity could result in them or members of their households being targeted or detained by ICE, which has been active in Riverside County and the surrounding area.¹⁴

These ramifications, even if only suspected and not later realized, will contribute to discouraging Latinos, “the fastest-growing racial voting bloc in the United States,”¹⁵ from participating in elections, whether by mail or in person. This is precisely what California and Riverside LULAC have actively fought against by working to register and turn out Latino and Hispanic voters.

III. Sheriff Bianco’s departure from established procedure seriously risks chilling future participation by Latino voters, in Riverside County and across California.

Courts have warned that governmental actions that have a “chilling effect on voter registration” can “threaten[] the right to vote which is the cornerstone of American democracy.” *United States v. Weber*, No. 2:25-cv-09149-DOC-ADS, 2026 WL 118807, at *20 (C.D. Cal. Jan. 15, 2026), *appeal docketed*, No. 26-1232 (9th Cir. Mar. 3, 2026). This is exactly the type of effect that Sheriff Bianco’s actions will have on LULAC members.

A. Fears regarding immigration enforcement could chill voter participation.

Many Riverside Area LULAC members are a part of “mixed-status” families, meaning that various members of their households may hold different immigration statuses. The hundreds of boxes of ballot materials seized by Sheriff Bianco could contain mail ballots and provisional ballot envelopes, for example, which have personally identifying information that could be attributed to

¹³ See <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/riversidecountycalifornia/PST045224> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

¹⁴ See, e.g., *Inland Empire residents afraid to leave their homes amid ICE activity*, NBC L.A. <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/video/on-air/inland-empire-residents-afraid-to-leave-their-homes-amid-ice-activity/3724016/> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

¹⁵ Albert Morales et al., *Latino Political Attitudes: Myths and Misconceptions*, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7786853/> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

any ballots still attached to them. Even if not, these materials have sensitive voter information—such as voters’ signatures—that normally never leaves the custody of election officials. Many Riverside Area LULAC members fear that Sheriff Bianco, who has indicated his support for increased immigration enforcement,¹⁶ could provide this sensitive information to federal authorities to track family members who are undocumented.

Latino communities across California have experienced aggressive immigration enforcement, so even the possibility that their personal information could be shared with the federal government is concerning to members.¹⁷ Many members believe that no matter what Sheriff Bianco says, any potentially sensitive data within the ballot materials will be used for immigration enforcement, among other improper purposes. Fears of such improper use will discourage Riverside Area LULAC members in those communities from registering or voting in future elections. The chilling effect is especially strong for newer citizens, first-time voters, and voters who are a part of mixed-status families in Latino communities.

Members are also concerned that the ballot seizure will be used as a pretext to conduct baseless investigations into “non-citizen voting.” The Riverside Area LULACs have a large percentage of naturalized citizen members who are eligible to vote and who LULAC registers to vote. These members are particularly concerned that depending on the exact nature of the materials that Sheriff Bianco has seized, they could be misidentified as non-citizens. That fear is supported. For example, naturalized citizens have both alien registration numbers from before they became citizens and naturalization certificate numbers after they become citizens. In the state’s voter databases, a naturalized citizen may also have an alien registration number listed next to their name. As a result, naturalized citizens are more likely than U.S. born citizens to wrongly be labeled as “non-citizens” when they are eligible to vote. The possibility that they are improperly flagged is a deeply troubling prospect for LULAC’s naturalized citizen members and constituents who have worked hard to become U.S. citizens and earn the right to vote, and may chill their future participation in elections.

These chilling effects may also go beyond voting-related activities. Many members have already been discouraged in recent months from participating in non-voting related activities, such as health fairs, due to heightened immigration enforcement activities. The ballot seizure will also dampen participation in other civic activities that LULAC and the Riverside Area LULACs pursue.

B. Fears regarding other targeting activities could chill voter participation.

¹⁶ *GOP Candidate Bianco Backs ICE Enforcement for California Governor*, Riverside Today (Feb. 10, 2026 6:23 PM), <https://nationaltoday.com/us/ca/riverside/news/2026/02/10/gop-candidate-bianco-backs-ice-enforcement-for-california-governor/> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

¹⁷ *See Karma Dickerson, Empty Sidewalks, Fear in the Air: Immigration Operations Continue in Southern California*, NBC L.A. (Jan. 13, 2026, 10:55 PM), <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/empty-sidewalks-fear-in-the-air-immigration-operations-continue-in-southern-california/3831240/> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

Immigration enforcement is not the only potential repercussion Riverside Area LULAC members fear. Riverside LULAC is also part of the Riverside Sheriff Accountability Coalition,¹⁸ a group of residents and organizations that advocates for more accountability and oversight for the Riverside Sheriff’s Office.¹⁹ Riverside Area LULACs and its members are concerned that their advocacy for increased accountability for the Sheriff’s office will make them a high-profile target in the Sheriff’s ballot investigation.

These targeting concerns are not theoretical. In 2024, the homes of six Latino individuals were raided over unfounded claims of voter fraud and at the direction of the Texas Attorney General in the run-up to the 2024 presidential election.²⁰ Three of these individuals were members of LULAC Texas. Many members of the Riverside Area LULACs fear that Sheriff Bianco’s seizures could be the first step in that type of baseless enforcement action.

IV. The Court should take swift action to return the ballots to the proper custodian.

This Court has the power to issue a writ of mandate and ensure that the ballots are returned to the proper custodian. “A writ of mandate may be issued by any court . . . to compel the performance of an act which the law specifically enjoins, as a duty resulting from an office, trust, or station” Cal. Code Civ. Proc., § 1085. The Supreme Court “will exercise that jurisdiction in appropriate cases when ‘the issues presented are of great public importance and must be resolved promptly.’” *Clean Air Constituency v. Cal. State Air Res. Bd.*, 523 P.2d 617, 620 (1974) (citing *Cnty. of Sacramento v. Hickman*, 66 Cal. 2d 841, 845 (1967); *Mooney v. Pickett*, 4 Cal. 3d 669, 675 (1971)).

Here, the unlawful seizure of ballots must be remedied, and the ballots returned to the proper custodian, along with a full accounting of what has been done with the ballots, as soon as possible. Sheriff Bianco has no legal right to hold the seized ballot materials. Every day he continues to hold the election materials in his custody not only risks the ballot materials being tampered with, but also the further loss of confidence and chilling effect that will take hold of LULAC’s membership, and Latino voters across California writ large.

Conclusion

This Court should grant one or both Petitions and proceed to expeditiously provide the swiftest possible relief for the citizens of California and especially Riverside County.

¹⁸ See <https://www.rivcosheriffaccountability.org/about> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

¹⁹ See <https://my.lwv.org/california/city-riverside-sw-riverside-county/sheriff-accountability-coalition> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

²⁰ Alejandro Serrano, *LULAC Condemns Paxton’s Election Fraud Raids as “Intimidation,”* TEX. TRIB. (Aug. 23, 2024, 7:49 p.m.), <https://www.texastribune.org/2024/08/23/texas-ken-paxton-vote-fraud-investigation/> (last visited Apr. 1, 2026).

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Pooja Chaudhuri
Pooja Chaudhuri (Cal. Bar No. 314847)
Norman L. Eisen*
DEMOCRACY DEFENDERS FUND
600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Ste. 15180
Washington, D.C. 20003
Tel: (202) 594-9958
pooja@democracydefenders.org
norman@democracydefenders.org

*Attorneys for Amicus Curiae
the League of United Latin American
Citizens*

**Pro hac vice forthcoming*

DECLARATION OF SERVICE

Case Name: **Attorney General of the State of California v. S.C. (Bianco), Cervantes v. Bianco (Riverside County Citizens).**

Case Number: **S295901, S295866.**

I, Pooja Chaudhuri, declare I am 18 years of age or older, and am not a party to this matter. My business address is 600 Pennsylvania Avenue SE, Ste. 15180, Washington, D.C. 20003.

On April 2, 2026, I caused to be served the following document: Amicus Letter in Support of Petitions via electronic service by transmitting a true copy via this Court’s TrueFiling system or via U.S. Mail as follows:

By U.S. Mail:

Riverside County Office of the County Counsel
3960 Orange Street, Suite 500
Riverside, CA 92501
Tel: (951) 955-6300
Counsel for Respondents Art Tinoco-Riverside County Registrar of Voters

By Electronic Service:

Robert Tyler (SBN 179572)
Tyler Law LLP
Email: rtyler@tylerlawllp.com
Counsel for Respondent Sheriff Chad Bianco

Anne P. Bellows (SBN 293722)
Deputy Attorney General
Email: anne.bellows@doj.ca.gov
Counsel for Attorney General and Secretary of State

Sonni Waknin (SBN 335337)
UCLA Voting Rights Project
Email: sonni@uclavrp.org
Counsel for Petitioners Clarissa Cervantes, Oscar Ortiz, Rebecca Robinson, and Nathan Kempe

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct. Executed this 2nd day of April, 2026, in Washington, DC.

/s/ Pooja Chaudhuri