

1 D. Andrew Gaona (028414)
2 **COPPERSMITH BROCKELMAN PLC**
3 2800 North Central Avenue, Suite 1900
4 Phoenix, Arizona 85004
5 T: (602) 381-5486
6 agaona@cblawyers.com

7 Sambo (Bo) Dul (030313)
8 **STATES UNITED DEMOCRACY CENTER**
9 8205 South Priest Drive, #10312
10 Tempe, Arizona 85284
11 T: (480) 253-9651
12 bo@statesuniteddemocracy.org

13 *Attorneys for Defendant*
14 *Arizona Secretary of State Katie Hobbs*

15 **ARIZONA SUPERIOR COURT**
16 **MARICOPA COUNTY**

17 KARI LAKE,

18 Contestant/Plaintiff,

19 v.

20 KATIE HOBBS, personally as Contestee and
21 in her official capacity as the Secretary of
22 State; et al.,

23 Defendants.

No. CV2022-095403

**ARIZONA SECRETARY OF
STATE'S OBJECTION TO
VERIFIED AMENDED PETITION
TO INSPECT BALLOTS**

(Assigned to Hon. Peter Thompson)

24 **Introduction and Background**

25 Defendant Katie Hobbs, in her official capacity as Arizona Secretary of State objects to
26 Plaintiff Kari Lake's ("Plaintiff) Amended Petition to Inspect Ballots Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-
677 ("Amended Petition"). In connection with her Complaint in Special Action and Verified
Statement of Election Contest Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-672, Plaintiff filed a Verified Petition to
Inspect Ballots Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-677 on December 13 and then filed the Amended
Petition on December 14. The Secretary asks this Court to deny the Amended Petition for the

1 reasons stated in Defendant Maricopa’s County’s Response to Petitioner’s Verified Petition to
2 Inspect Ballots Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-672 and in Defendant Maricopa County’s Response to
3 Petitioner’s Amended Verified Petition to Inspect Ballots Pursuant to A.R.S. § 16-672
4 (“Maricopa County’s Responses”). Additionally, as detailed in the motion to dismiss just filed
5 by the Secretary, Plaintiff’s election contest fails to state any cognizable claims for relief and
6 should be dismissed, thereby mooting Plaintiff’s petition to inspect ballots under A.R.S. § 16-
7 677

8 Argument

9 The Secretary joins in full the arguments set forth in Maricopa County’s Responses, and
10 files this Objection to raise one additional and independent reason to reject Plaintiff’s Amended
11 Petition: because discovery should not be granted in connection with an invalid election contest.

12 An election contest must meet threshold pleading requirements to proceed. *See Hancock*
13 *v. Bisnar*, 212 Ariz. 344, 348 ¶ 17 (2006) (assessing election contest under Rule 8(a) notice
14 pleading requirements); *Griffin v. Buzard*, 86 Ariz. 166, 169-70 (1959) (election contest subject
15 to dismissal if it fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted). For all the reasons
16 detailed in the Secretary’s Motion to Dismiss, Plaintiff’s election contest fails to clear that bar
17 and should be dismissed.

18 A plaintiff is not entitled to use an invalid pleading as a springboard for discovery. *See*
19 *Lakewood Cmty. Ass’n v. Orozco*, No. 1 CA-CV 19-0194, 2020 WL 950225, at *1 (Ariz. Ct.
20 App. Feb. 27, 2020) (holding that “[a] motion to dismiss under Rule 12(b)(6) tests the allegations
21 of a pleading by assuming the truth of the well-pleaded facts in the complaint *before* the parties
22 engage in discovery” and “[t]hus, no discovery was necessary or appropriate” before a trial court
23 rules on such a motion) (emphasis added).

24 Although Arizona appellate courts have not addressed the specific question of whether
25 an election contest statement that fails to clear the pleading threshold may be used to justify a
26 ballot inspection, many other courts have made amply clear that it cannot. For instance, the

1 Minnesota Supreme Court recently denied a defeated candidate the opportunity to inspect ballots
2 under an inspection provision similar to Arizona’s because the contest allegations failed to state
3 a cognizable claim. *See Bergstrom v. McEwen*, 960 N.W.2d 556, 565-66 (Minn. 2021). The
4 candidate alleged that “irregularities” in the conduct of the election and in the absentee ballot
5 canvass “raised questions over who received the largest number of votes legally cast in the
6 election,” and argued that “transparency and public confidence in the integrity of the election
7 require[d]” that she be allowed to inspect the ballots. *Id.* at 558 & 566 (internal quotation marks
8 omitted). The court rejected the argument that the mere filing of an election contest created an
9 “absolute right” to ballot inspection, holding that inspection was only allowed if the contest
10 notice stated a claim upon which relief could be granted. *Id.* at 565.

11 The highest courts of many other states agree. *See, e.g., Zahray v. Emricson*, 182 N.E.2d
12 756, 757-58 (Ill. 1962) (election contest “cannot be employed to allow a party, on mere
13 suspicion, to have the ballots opened and subjected to scrutiny to find evidence upon which to
14 make a tangible charge”); *McClendon v. McKeown*, 323 S.W.2d 542, 545 (Ark. 1959) (“It is not
15 the duty, or within the power, of the Court within the scope of the allegations and prayer of the
16 Petition herein, to impound and open the ballot box or boxes, and, in effect *canvas* the votes cast
17 for Mayor in order to declare the nominee” merely on the allegation ““that after said cancellation
18 and retabulation, the Petitioner verily believes that he will have received more votes[.]””)
19 (Emphasis in original); *Cruse v. Richards*, 37 P.2d 382, 383–84 (Colo. 1934) (“In a contest
20 proceeding it is always necessary to allege facts which will enable the court to determine that a
21 different result would follow in the vote by reason of such alleged facts. . . . Courts cannot
22 properly embark on a mere fishing expedition by opening up ballot boxes when there is an utter
23 lack of specific allegations as to the distribution of the votes.”); *Gollmar’s Election, Case of*, 175
24 A. 510, 513 (Pa. 1934) (“The pleadings before us would seem only an effort to place the situation
25 in such a light as to justify a voyage of exploration into a large number of ballot boxes, in the
26 hope of an ultimate discovery. Such is not province of a contest[.]”)

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2 means this 15th day of December, 2022, upon:

3 Honorable Peter Thompson
4 Maricopa County Superior Court
5 c/o Sarah Umphress
6 sarah.umphress@jbazmc.maricopa.gov

7 Bryan James Blehm
8 Blehm Law PLLC
9 10869 North Scottsdale Road, Suite 103-256
10 Scottsdale, Arizona 85254
11 bryan@blehmlegal.com

12 Kurt Olsen
13 Olsen Law, P.C.
14 1250 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 700
15 Washington, DC 20036
16 ko@olsenlawpc.com

17 *Attorneys for Contestants/Plaintiffs*

18 Daniel C. Barr
19 Alexis E. Danneman
20 Austin Yost
21 Samantha J. Burke
22 Perkins Coie LLP
23 2901 North Central Avenue
24 Suite 2000
25 Phoenix, AZ 85012
26 dbarr@perkinscoie.com
adanneman@perkinscoie.com
ayost@perkinscoie.com
sburke@perkinscoie.com

Attorneys for Defendant/Contestee Katie Hobbs

Joseph La Rue
Joe Branco
Karen Hartman-Tellez
Maricopa County Attorney's Office
225 West Madison St.
Phoenix, AZ 85003
laruej@mcao.maricopa.gov
brancoj@mcao.maricopa.gov
hartmank@mcao.maricopa.gov
c-civilmailbox@mcao.maricopa.gov

Attorneys for Maricopa County Defendants

26 /s/ Diana Hanson _____