

S295901

Jorge Navarrete Clerk

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF CALIFORNIA
En Banc

Deputy

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA, Petitioner,

v.

SUPERIOR COURT OF RIVERSIDE COUNTY, Respondent;

CHAD BIANCO, as Sheriff, etc. et al., Real Parties in Interest.

The petition for review is granted. Petitioner must serve and file his petition for writ of mandate, filed on March 23, 2026, with the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Two (Case No. E088096) with this court no later than April 15, 2026. Real parties Sheriff Chad Bianco and the Riverside County Sheriff's Department are ordered to show cause before this court, when the above-entitled matter is placed on calendar, why the relief sought by petitioner should not be granted. The return must be served and filed within 30 days after the petition is filed.

Petitioner's motion to file the unredacted petition for review and the unredacted reply under seal is granted. Real parties' motion to file the unredacted answer and the unredacted declaration of James Merrill under seal is granted. (Cal. Rules of Court, rules 2.550(d), 8.46(d).) In ordering the sealing, this court makes the findings required by California Rules of Court, rules 2.550(d) and 8.46(d)(6). These unredacted documents are ordered sealed because they include information contained in search warrants, which remain subject to the Riverside County Superior Court's sealing order. (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 8.46(g)(1) ["Nothing filed publicly in the reviewing court—including any application, brief, petition, or memorandum—may disclose material contained in a record that is sealed, lodged conditionally under seal, or otherwise subject to a pending motion to file under seal."].) The clerk of this court is directed to file the unredacted petition for review, the unredacted reply, the unredacted answer, and the unredacted declaration of James Merrill under seal.

Real parties' motion to file the unredacted declarations of Sheriff Chad Bianco and Robert H. Tyler under seal, filed on April 1, 2026, is denied. (See Cal. Rules of Court, rules 2.550, 2.551, and 8.46.) Real parties shall, within 48 hours, either refile the documents with proper redactions (Cal. Rules of Court, rule 2.551(c)) or notify the Clerk of this court that these two unredacted declarations (lodged conditionally under seal on April 1, 2026) should be filed unsealed as part of the public record. (See Cal. Rules of Court, rules 8.46(d)(7), 8.47(c)(2)(D).)

The parties are ordered to file within 48 hours any opposition to the Media Coalition's motion to unseal, filed in this court on April 3, 2026. The parties are directed to address whether the search warrants properly remain sealed (Pen. Code, § 1534, subd. (a)) and whether an order from this court unsealing the search warrants would require the unsealing of all of the other sealed documents (Cal. Rules of Court, rules 2.550(c) & 8.46).

The application for stay is granted. To permit further consideration of the petition for review, real parties, their agents, employees, and anyone acting on their behalf are hereby ordered to pause the investigation into the November 2025 special election and preserve all seized items. (*People ex rel. S.F. Bay etc. Com. v. Town of Emeryville* (1968) 69 Cal.2d 533, 537.)

Petitioner and real parties are directed to meet and confer regarding additional measures to protect the integrity of the seized items during the pendency of this matter, including but not limited to the appointment of a special master to take temporary possession of them. If the parties reach agreement regarding such measures, they shall jointly file and serve a stipulation and proposed order with the court for its consideration on or before April 15, 2026. If the parties cannot reach agreement, each party shall file and serve simultaneous letter briefs regarding the measures they propose to be taken to safeguard the integrity of the seized items by the same date. The parties shall file and serve simultaneous letter briefs in response on or before April 20, 2026.

GUERRERO

Chief Justice

CORRIGAN

Associate Justice

LIU

Associate Justice

KRUGER

Associate Justice

GROBAN

Associate Justice

EVANS

Associate Justice

Associate Justice