Family of man killed in deputy-involved shooting in Riverside files federal lawsuit



By Rob McMillan

Monday, August 24, 2026 5:59PM



The family of a man who was shot and killed by San Bernardino County sheriff's deputies in January 2026, has filed a federal lawsuit alleging wrongdoing in the fatal encounter.

SAN BERNARDINO, Calif. (KABC) -- The family of a man who was shot and killed by San Bernardino County sheriff's deputies in January 2026, has filed a federal lawsuit alleging wrongdoing in the fatal encounter.

The shooting occurred in a Riverside parking lot as deputies attempted to serve a no-bail warrant on Jaque Rabon, 23, according to the San Bernardino County

Sheriff's Department. Body camera video released from the incident shows deputies pursuing Rabon before opening fire.

Rabon was later pronounced dead.

Barbara Thompson said the family is seeking accountability for the death of her nephew.

"I want justice. I want accountability. I mean, this is wrong," Thompson said.

Rabon's mother, Tyesha Moody, remembered her son as a source of support for the family.

"Jacque was a giver; Jacque was our supporter, he was our ... he was more like my daddy than my son," Moody said.

The family's attorney, Dale Galipo, challenged the circumstances described by authorities and criticized the deputies' use of force.

"Think about this: If anyone other than a police officer showed up at a shopping plaza and shot someone 20 times who was unarmed, they would be immediately jailed, immediately charged with murder, with no bail.

"So why are the laws so different for the police?" Galipo said.

Galipo also disputed the Sheriff's Department's claim that Rabon may have been reaching into a black bag he was wearing for a weapon. No weapon was found.

"The only thing the police are saying is he had a bag and it looked like he was reaching towards the bag," said Galipo. "Well, guess what? Many people have bags when they're shopping or in front of shopping centers, and you can't shoot someone for having a bag or reaching into a bag."

Family members said they continue to struggle with Rabon's loss while seeking answers.

"It hurts not having him, right? But it really hurts for him being done the way he got done," said Kentae Isaiah, Rabon's cousin.

Moody said the lawsuit cannot undo what happened.

"No amount of money or the lawsuit or anything is going to bring him back. But me being able to face the officers that took his life would give me a little comfort," she said.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is not commenting on the case while it is being investigated by the California Department of Justice because the suspect was unarmed.

The investigation remains ongoing.

DAILY PRESS

LOCAL

Adelanto planners reject data center zoning update, item moves to council



McKenna Mobley
Victorville Daily Press

Aug. 25, 2026, 4:02 a.m. PT

Key Points

- The Adelanto Planning Commission voted to deny a zoning update that would allow for future data center development.
- The commission's vote is only a recommendation, and the Adelanto City Council will make the final decision.
- Supporters believe data centers could bring jobs and prosperity, while some residents raised health and resource concerns.

The Adelanto Planning Commission voted 3-2 on Aug. 19 to deny a zoning update that could have opened the door to future data center development in the city.

However, the planning commission's vote is only advisory. For major land use matters, including zoning updates, the city council's vote is the final decision. The item will now be presented before the Adelanto City Council for approval.

A planning commission denial typically means that the board reviewed the proposal and concluded it should not be approved. The city council can now agree or disagree with the commission's decision or approve the item with modifications or conditions.

No date has been selected yet as to when the Adelanto City Council will hear this item. It will not be discussed at the Aug. 26 council meeting due to legal noticing requirements.

The proposed amendment was only a text change to the zoning code and would not approve any specific data center project, authorize construction, grant development entitlements or change development standards. Instead, if approved, released city information states the updates will establish regulations governing where and how data centers may be considered within the city.

Read More: Adelanto moves toward data center zoning update following San Diego tour

Getting ahead of the data center trend

Adelanto residents and citizens from neighboring cities attended the public hearing to give their input regarding the proposed zoning amendment. An attendee told the Daily Press there were about 200 in the audience.

There was confusion among those in attendance and Commission Chair Chris Waggener, who repeatedly responded to anti-data center public comments that the hearing "isn't about data centers."

However, the city of Adelanto posted on Facebook on Aug. 6 that the update to Title 17 of the Adelanto Municipal Code "identifies additional land uses that may be considered in the LM, MI, and ADD zoning districts, subject to discretionary permit approval. These uses include energy and utility facilities, data centers, battery energy storage systems and microgrids, microchip and semiconductor manufacturing and drone manufacturing."

According to Waggener, the planning commission was asked to look at the zoning language update and to move it forward.

"Even if all five commissioners vote against the item, it still goes to city council," he added.

According to Adelanto planning commissioners, the department previously received a recommendation from staff and city engineers to deny the zoning update.

In the end, Waggener and Vice Chair Ricardo Rubalcava voted to approve the amendment, with a supporting argument that the addition of a data center would bring employment and prosperity to Adelanto, like the 110-acre Clark Pacific facility that opened in 2017, which they claim is now Adelanto's largest employer. The Clark Pacific company website cites over 900 employees across its seven California facilities.

Data centers house and process digital information, can boost local tax revenues and create short-term construction jobs. However, they require relatively few permanent employees compared with other large-scale economic development projects, according to research from the Brookings Institution.

Waggener stated the city is getting ahead of the data center current. "Nobody is knocking on our doors; we're simply doing an ordinance."

Public comment

Roughly 59 residents from Adelanto and other High Desert cities spoke during the public comment section of the hearing, an overwhelming majority of whom opposed the zoning updates due to environmental concerns.

Public commenters were limited to one minute each due to the large crowd size.

Tonya Patton stated she is concerned with the health risks of data centers. "How many people here realize the dangers, and that their health will be affected?"

Guadalupe Ochoa, like many others who spoke, worries about the condition of Adelanto's water. "Our water is brown. We have issues going on now; why consider something like this?" Previously, Adelanto residents demanded a water ad hoc committee due to contaminated drinking water.

Throughout the meeting, Waggener responded to public comments by alleging that other Victor Valley cities either already have data centers or are planning them, and

that officials are describing the projects in less controversial terms in public documents to avoid public backlash.

Adelanto Project Planner Jim Hirsch made similar remarks when responding to the public after his PowerPoint presentation on the zone text amendment. He alleged that Victorville, Hesperia and Apple Valley city officials of classifying their towns planned data centers as "warehouses filled with electronics."

"They deceive the public. We have been overly transparent, and your attitude[s] makes me wish we had never been transparent."

In his presentation, Hirsch noted a possible standard that the zoning amendment would ratify. Potential data center or power plant occupants would be required to generate their own power, plus an additional 25% for the city.

McKenna Mobley is a reporter for the Daily Press. She can be reached at mmobley@usatodayco.com or on Instagram @mckenna_dailypress.

COURTHOUSE NEWS SERVICE

California Supreme Court halts SoCal town's water utility takeover

The water utility serving the town of Apple Valley had asked the state high court to decide what makes a public takeover of a private utility truly necessary.

QUINN WELSCH / August 24, 2026



The California Supreme Court is located in the Earl Warren Building in San Francisco. (Courthouse News photo/Maria Dinzeo)

(CN) — The California Supreme Court dealt a blow to a local government's ability to seize water utilities on Monday, ruling that courts get the final say on whether a public utility is necessary.

Apple Valley, located in San Bernardino County, California, will have to go back to the drawing board for its plans to take over the privately owned water utility, Apple Valley Ranchos Water Company.

In a unanimous decision sending the case back down to a California appeals court, the California Supreme Court sided with the utility company in the latest in a decade-long eminent domain dispute between Apple Valley and the utility company.

“The town of Apple Valley, which seeks to take over a privately owned water utility, argues that its decision to take the utility is subject to the usual standard governing judicial review of a resolution of necessity — meaning, in effect, that the court can disallow the taking only if it concludes that the town has grossly abused its discretion,” Supreme Court Justice Leondra Kruger wrote in the 7-0 decision. “The Court of Appeal accepted this argument. We do not.”

The case goes back to at least 2010 when investment firm Carlyle Infrastructure Partners bought Apple Valley Ranchos Water Company and raised the rates significantly. That’s when the town of Apple Valley began considering taking the utility, which serves about 65,000 people.

The town initially approved two resolutions in 2015 to acquire the water systems, and then filed an eminent domain complaint against the utility. But this required judicial review, Kruger wrote.

“The resolution is not the be-all and end-all of a condemnation proceeding,” Kruger continued. “As a general rule, public necessity is a matter for the public entity to decide, subject to limited judicial review.”

Shortly after the resolutions, the utility was sold again, from Carlyle to Liberty Utilities, which owns other private utilities across the United States. The company is a subsidiary of Algonquin Power & Utilities Corp,

Liberty argued in San Bernardino Superior Court that Apple Valley had not yet shown what the public necessity of the takeover was and that more necessary public use elements had not been met.

After a 67-day bench trial, a judge ultimately ruled that Liberty successfully disproved the town’s argument for public necessity. Liberty was awarded $13.2 million in attorney’s fees. But a court of appeal reversed the decision, finding that the lower court failed to give deference to the town’s decisions and findings.

The Supreme Court decision on Monday hinged on the gross abuse of discretion standard, a legal term that allows an eminent domain takeover to go through unless a judge finds it was in bad faith. However, that standard runs into trouble with a 1992 California law that allows public utilities to dispute the necessity of the takeover.

“To evaluate a challenge to the taking of privately owned public utility property, the trial court, sitting as trier of fact, must exercise its independent judgment to determine whether the utility owner challenging the taking has rebutted the relevant presumptions and has thus established by a preponderance of the evidence that the taking is not authorized by the eminent domain law," Kruger wrote.

Similar fights are playing out across the state, including in San Francisco, where lawmakers are also trying to use eminent domain to take over part of the Pacific Gas & Electric grid in an effort to lower costs.

Apple Valley and its attorneys did not respond to requests for comment. Liberty Utilities and its attorneys also did not respond to requests for comment.

DAILY PRESS

NEWS

Bridge projects will affect 16 sites along two interstates in Barstow



Rene Ray De La Cruz
Victorville Daily Press

Aug. 24, 2026, 11:57 a.m. PT

The Bridge Preventive Maintenance Project will affect several areas along Interstate 15 and 40 in the Barstow area of San Bernardino County.

Caltrans said the $2.7 million bridge project is scheduled to begin on Monday, Aug. 24, and is expected to be completed by January 2027.

Crews are scheduled to operate overnight from Monday through Saturday, between 7 p.m. and 6 a.m. Designated lanes and ramps will be closed during these hours.

Maintenance work will take place at 16 bridge sites, including sections from Ghost Town Road to Yermo Ditch, and on I-40 from Dean Wash to Mustang Wash.

The bridges have been marked for preventive maintenance, which will feature polyester concrete overlay and joint seal replacements.

Motorists are asked to observe signage indicating ongoing work and detours, and to reduce speed when approaching and traveling within the construction zone.

To assist planning commutes, view live traffic conditions using QuickMap. For those with sensory disabilities requiring alternate formats, and those needing information in a language other than English, contact Caltrans Public Affairs at 909-383-4631 or TTY 711.

Jury hears conflicting theories as opening arguments kick off San Bernardino City Council member's misdemeanor trial



San Bernardino City Councilmember Treasure Ortiz and her defense attorney, Peter Schlueter of Schlueter Law Firm, stand as the jury enters the courtroom during her trial on two misdemeanor eavesdropping charges on Monday, Aug. 24, 2026, at the San Bernardino Justice Center. (Photo by Anjali Sharif-Paul, The Sun/SCNG)



By **ISRAEL J. CARREÓN JR.** | icarreon@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

PUBLISHED: August 24, 2026 at 2:36 PM PDT | UPDATED: August 24, 2026 at 5:30 PM PDT

Opening statements in the trial of San Bernardino City Council member Treasure Ortiz, charged with two misdemeanor eavesdropping counts, were presented to jurors Monday morning, with the prosecution arguing that consent was never explicitly given by parties she recorded. The defense says otherwise, maintaining that state law does not require verbal consent in those situations.

The case largely rests on the jury's interpretation of whether Ortiz violated the state's Penal Code Section 632, making it unlawful for a person who, without consent, intentionally uses an electronic device to eavesdrop on or record a confidential communication.

San Bernardino County Deputy District Attorney Carlo DiCesare, representing the District Attorney's office, began the morning hearing's opening statements in San Bernardino Superior Court.

DiCesare began by listing the facts of the case.

Ortiz faces criminal charges for allegedly secretly recording conversations with San Bernardino Police Chief Darren Goodman and San Bernardino Police Officers Association President Jose Loera, a police sergeant. She pleaded not guilty in February.

The recordings involved discussions about how police had searched a law enforcement database for information about Ortiz, which Ortiz claims was meant to discredit her ahead of her City Council campaign. Prosecutors contend that she broke California's two-party consent law by recording these conversations.

DiCesare said that Ortiz first met with Loera on Aug. 15, 2024, for an hour and 19 minutes at DJ Coffee Shop, 265 E. 40th St., in San Bernardino. The DA's office says the meeting took place in a booth, 12 to 16 feet from other patrons.

Ortiz also met with Goodman on Aug. 29, 2024, at San Bernardino Police Headquarters in a conference room accessible only with a key card. DiCesare said the room has no cameras or recording equipment.

In both meetings, DiCesare argues that Ortiz made no statement that conversations would be recorded and did not ask for permission to do so.

DiCesare told jurors: “You’ll have both of these recordings, and you’ll be able to listen to them and confirm all of this for yourself.”

Ortiz’s attorney, Peter Schlueter, highlighted in opening remarks some of the background as to why Ortiz was meeting with Goodman and Loera covering police earlier searching the database about her.

Ortiz currently has a pending federal lawsuit alleging that she made critical comments about then-San Bernardino City Mayor John Valdivia on March 4, 2020. Eight days later, the lawsuit alleges that San Bernardino City Police Detective Steve Desrocher acted outside the scope of any official investigation by accessing the California Law Enforcement Telecommunications System – CLETS – to look up Ortiz’s criminal history. The CLETS system connects public safety agencies to criminal histories, driver records, and other databases.

Ortiz’s federal lawsuit also alleged that the search of the law enforcement database “coincided” with Ortiz’s criticism of Valdivia’s alleged sexual harassment of city staff. She also criticized alleged cash bribes from city contractors and police procurement practices.

Schlueter argues that the state law does not require oral consent or an oral request to record, or that you must give an affirmative “yes” or “no.”

“Every time I call the bank, it says this conversation might or may be reported for quality assurance, and I don’t get to say yes or no,” Schlueter said. “Was this recording confidential in regards to the law?”

In May 2025, prior to the filing of the federal lawsuit, the city rejected Ortiz’s claim, and at a City Council meeting, Mayor Helen Tran read a statement saying: “The city’s investigation finds the claim to be frivolous, filed in bad faith, dishonest and an attempt to swindle the city of San Bernardino out of $2 million.”

During a Tuesday, Aug. 18, hearing to determine the admissibility of evidence or testimony in Ortiz’s misdemeanor eavesdropping case, it was revealed that she secretly worked for the FBI from 2022 to early 2025. Her work involved an investigation into alleged bribery and corruption, though authorities have not revealed more information about the probe. She was elected to the council in November 2024 and remains a member.

By late morning Monday, Goodman had taken the stand, with DiCesare confirming with the police chief where his meeting with Ortiz took place before the jury broke for lunch.

When the jurors returned, DiCesare provided a transcript of the Aug. 29 meeting between Goodman and Ortiz and played the full recording in the courtroom.

During Goodman's testimony, the police chief told DiCesare that he had no knowledge of being recorded, and said that Ortiz did not indicate otherwise. Goodman said that he wasn't aware of the record until the DA's office presented it to him a year later.

Goodman also testified that he wanted the DA's office to pursue prosecution over the recording.

"I think it's an affront to anybody who ever believes that they're having a private conversation to be illegally recorded," Goodman said, adding that the recording was used as a "tool to hurt or to defame people."

Schlueter had yet to cross-examine Goodman by the end of Monday's proceedings.

Trial proceedings are scheduled to continue through Thursday.

Extreme heat weather warning issued for the Inland Empire this week

Triple digits predicted for this week, with highs up to 108 degrees in some areas



Rodeo fans head for the exits after the third and final performance at the 40th annual Norco Mounted Posse Rodeo at the Ingalls Event Center in Norco on Sunday, Aug. 23, 2026. (Photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)



By **ALLYSON VERGARA** | avergara@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

PUBLISHED: August 24, 2026 at 1:54 PM PDT | UPDATED: August 24, 2026 at 2:14 PM PDT

With extreme heat expected this week across the Inland Empire, residents and communities are staying indoors and finding ways to keep cool.

Upland resident Teresa Guzman said she will be staying indoors “as much as possible,” avoiding outdoor malls and activities and ensuring she’s stocked up on water and electrolytes.

“This heat sucks not only for us, but for animals as well,” said Guzman, who has multiple cats and reptiles in her home. “With the heat being in the triple digits, we can get dehydrated more quickly. It can cause headaches and fatigue.”

The numbers don’t lie.

The National Weather Service forecasts temperatures across areas of western Riverside and San Bernardino counties to hit triple digits. The deserts will be even hotter, with the mercury ranging from the 100s to 109 degrees this week in some desert areas.

Meteorologists issued an extreme heat warning for the Inland region that takes effect Tuesday, Aug. 25, and lasts through 8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 28.

High temperatures will be 5 degrees to 10 degrees higher than average through Friday, the weather service reported.

Temperatures in western Riverside County were expected to range from 100 to 107 all week, with overnight temperatures in the low to mid-70s.

Forecasters predict about 117 degrees in the desert areas and an extreme heat warning is in effect until at least 8 p.m. Friday for the Coachella Valley and the San Gorgonio Pass, weather officials said. Overnight temperatures would be about 5 to 8 degrees above normal, according to the service.

A high of 107 was predicted in Riverside for Thursday, Aug. 27. Highs of at least 108 were expected in Menifee later this week.

In San Bernardino County, meteorologists predicted highs of 106 this week, and 104 in Fontana.

On Monday, some Inland schools already were taking action.

A email from the Murrieta Valley Unified School District warned about the extreme heat warning and told parents that students should take precautions — including dressing appropriately, bringing water, wearing sunscreen or contacting health services for students who could be affected — during the heat. Officials also installed weather monitoring systems at four schools to check conditions, the email states.

National Weather Service officials warned of heat-related illnesses.

They encouraged residents to drink plenty of fluids, stay in air conditioning and out of the sun, and check in on relatives and neighbors. They also urged people to never leave children or pets in parked vehicles for even a minute, as temperatures inside vehicles can reach deadly levels quickly.

Both Inland counties maintain free, public cooling centers at community centers or other facilities.

A full list of cooling centers in Riverside County is available at www.rcaging.org/cooling-centers. In San Bernardino County, a list of resources and cooling centers can be found at the county's website, https://daas.sbcounty.gov/extreme-weather/.

Nothing changes yet with the Supreme Court’s order on elections. But it could open door to ‘chaos’

Rather than saying that Trump's order is legal, the high court said Monday it was too early for Democratic-run states to challenge it in June, when they convinced a federal judge in Boston to freeze the order for November's election.



An election worker sorts vote-by-mail ballots at the Miami-Dade County Supervisor of Elections Office for the Florida primary election in Doral, Fla., Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2026. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)

By **ASSOCIATED PRESS**

PUBLISHED: August 25, 2026 at 5:44 AM PDT | UPDATED: August 25, 2026 at 5:50 AM PDT

By NICHOLAS RICCARDI

The Supreme Court's decision giving preliminary approval for President Donald Trump's order restricting mail voting may not lead to a single election procedure changing during the November midterms, but it has already thrown into uncertainty the method that nearly one-third of the country uses to vote.

Rather than saying that Trump's order is legal, the high court said Monday it was too early for Democratic-run states to challenge it in June, when they convinced a federal judge in Boston to freeze the order for November's election. That effectively restarts the legal fight over the order in an incredibly compressed timeline, with initial ballots scheduled to be sent to North Carolina's overseas and military voters in just over a week, on Sept. 4.

A second injunction barring the U.S. Postal Service from making changes to comply with Trump's directive remains in effect. Still, the administration late Monday filed a motion asking that the second hold be removed, and has posted new regulations from the Postal Service that would go into effect Tuesday if the legal pathway is fully cleared.

That new rule requires specific formatting for envelopes containing mail ballots — which may force some jurisdictions to completely revise theirs — and makes states use an electronic system to identify to the Postal Service who is voting by mail. If states don't comply with the rule, their mail ballots won't get sent.

The prospect of such a potential sweeping overhaul in mere days boggled critics' minds. In her dissent, Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson warned that the decision "needlessly injects chaos and uncertainty into the upcoming midterm elections."

David Becker, executive director of the Center for Election Innovation & Research, agreed, saying the majority “seemed to create complete chaos leading up to the midterm elections” and it’d be “impossible” for states to comply with the new rules at this late date.



Election workers sort vote-by-mail ballots at the Miami-Dade County Supervisor of Elections Office for the Florida primary election in Doral, Fla., Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2026. (AP Photo/Lynne Sladky)

Some ballots for the November election are set to go out within days

Jesse Salinas, the registrar of Yolo County in California and president of that state’s association of election officers, noted that ballots in his state start going out in 11 days and his county already printed its envelopes.

“You look at the timeline, and it’s a bit chaotic,” Salinas said, noting he doesn’t know precisely which envelope designs comply with the new rules.

He dismissed the idea of a last-minute revision in procedures. “The capacity to do that, I just don’t see it,” Salinas said.

Tammy Patrick, chief program officer at the Elections Center, an association of 2,500 election officers, warned that it’s impossible for any state to comply with the rule and that no one she talked to has tried.

“There isn’t a single state that does their elections in a way that this postal rule lays out,” Patrick said in an interview. “There has been this assumption that this is not going to happen because it could not happen the way it’s laid out, because no one does it this way.”

Cisco Aguilar, the Democratic Secretary of State in Nevada, where every registered voter gets a mail ballot, noted the post office had already misdelivered three dozen mail ballots from his state's June primary.

"They're going to come in within seven days and build a massive database that has 100% accuracy?" Aguilar said in disbelief. "It is impossible to implement this system in that time frame."

Trump votes by mail, but has sought to curb it for others

Trump has long sought to make voting by mail largely impossible, though he himself has repeatedly cast his ballots by mail.

Trump falsely blamed his 2020 loss on mail voting and spun up baroque conspiracy theories that he's tried to prove while back in office. Judges blocked him from creating new voting restrictions by executive order last year, and he only issued his latest order after his bill to revamp voting procedures stalled in the Senate amidst Democratic opposition.

The Election Assistance Commission found that 29% of voters in 2024 cast their ballots through the mail. Democrats are more likely to use mail voting than Republicans, a reflection of how the process has become polarized since Trump began attacking it in 2020. Still, the president has to date been unable to make the sweeping changes he's sought because the Constitution grants control of voting rules to states, and in federal elections, to Congress — not the president.

Legal experts stressed that's why they view it as unlikely Trump's order will actually be implemented. Not only did the majority in the Supreme Court's unsigned order note that it hasn't determined whether the measure is constitutional, but every victory the administration has won so far has only been because it's argued that it's premature to talk about its constitutionality. Opponents are already weighing new lawsuits since the final rule was published Friday night.

More litigation is expected

Becker, a former Department of Justice lawyer who co-wrote a book debunking Trump's 2020 election lies, added that he expects the next round of litigation to keep the order from being implemented in November. Rick Hasen, a UCLA law professor, said after the ruling: "This doesn't necessarily mean anything in terms of November."

Derek Muller, a Notre Dame law professor, said the Supreme Court still ensured a fraught court battle in the coming days.

“It puts courts in a terrible place, because whatever happens is super close to the election,” Muller said. “If it permits it, it creates super disruption for the states. If it suspends it, it visibly angers the administration.”

Hasen said it’s inconceivable that the regulation will impact voters in November.

“Both legal and practical reasons make this practically impossible to enforce,” he said of Trump’s mail voting order.

Elections are run by local officials in thousands of scattered offices, many of which don’t even have a full-time employee. Patrick said that those who work in the field have been left reeling.

“Election officials just feel like punching bags at this moment because they plan one way of conducting their elections, and have contingency plans if a fire breaks out, or one location loses power,” Patrick said. “But how do you plan for something that affects one-third, one half, or all of your voters?”

California legislators push energy bills as electricity costs remain among nation's highest

By Darrielle Fair | CBS Sacramento

August 24, 2026 / 9:44 PM PDT

California lawmakers are pushing a package of energy bills aimed at lowering electricity costs and making clean energy more accessible as residents continue to face some of the highest utility rates in the country.

California has the second-highest electricity rates in the nation, according to the state Legislative Analyst's Office. Electricity also has become one of the fastest-growing household expenses in the state, according to UC Berkeley experts.

Democratic lawmakers promoted several energy proposals Monday, urging their passage before next week's legislative deadline on Aug. 31.

One of those measures, Senate Bill 913 by Sen. Josh Becker, would allow customer-owned clean energy resources, including home batteries and smart thermostats, to compete with traditional power sources to help improve reliability on the state's electrical grid.

Another proposal, backed by Assemblymember Chris Ward, would require the California Public Utilities Commission to place greater value on community solar and battery storage as part of efforts to lower energy costs.

Ward said the proposal could also reduce regulatory barriers for homeowners with existing rooftop solar while expanding access to solar power for people who cannot install panels on their own homes.

"One thing that's never been in the mix is, what do we do about the 55% of Californians who are renters, who are low-income families, who are in places that don't necessarily support a rooftop solar system?" Ward said. "How do they get to be a part of it when they want to be able to buy into solar systems and make their contributions?"

The legislature is also considering Senate Bill 868, authored by Sen. Scott Wiener, which would address regulatory barriers surrounding plug-in balcony solar systems.

Republican lawmakers, however, are questioning whether the proposals will actually make energy more affordable for Californians.

State Sen. Tony Strickland said residents are already struggling with the cost of everyday necessities.

"We have the highest gas tax and the highest gas prices in the nation. And right now people can't afford a home," Strickland said.

Strickland argued that additional energy policies could place an even greater financial burden on Californians, particularly seniors and young people.

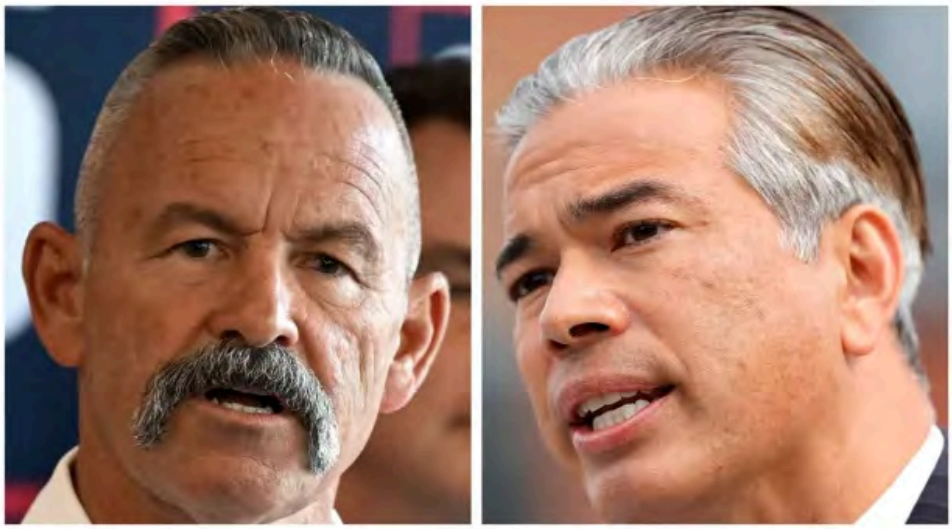
"Seniors on fixed income can't afford these policies. Young college students are trying to make it. They can't afford these policies," Strickland said.

He said California needs to focus on affordability as it considers its long-term energy strategy.

"A lot of families are having to decide between a gallon of milk and a gallon of gas," Strickland said. "Living paycheck to paycheck. And we keep putting more of a burden on them so they can't afford to live here, and then they end up moving to another state."

Becker's bill is currently being considered by the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Ward's solar energy proposal is on the Senate floor awaiting a final vote, while Wiener's SB 868 is also being considered in the Assembly.

California Supreme Court hears Riverside County, Bianco ballot seizure cases



The California Supreme Court on Monday, Aug. 24, 2026, heard arguments in a case involving Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco, left, California Attorney General Rob Bonta and more than 650,000 seized ballots. (Bianco file photo by Will Lester, Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG; Bonta file photo by Justin Sullivan/Getty Images/TNS)




By **BRIAN ROKOS** | brokos@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

and **JEFF HORSEMAN** | jhorseman@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: August 24, 2026 at 1:21 PM PDT | UPDATED: August 24, 2026 at 3:03 PM PDT

Attorneys asking the California Supreme Court to order Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco to return the 650,000 ballots he seized after a November special election in order to open a criminal investigation argued Monday, Aug. 24, that Bianco failed to go through what they said were the proper legal channels.

Bianco's attorney said the sheriff acted properly when he suspected that a crime may have occurred.

The justices did not rule on that or a related case on Monday, nor did they say when they would.

Bianco served search warrants and collected the ballots after a watchdog organization alleged there was a 45,000-vote gap between the number of Proposition 50 ballots received by Riverside County and the number of ballots cast in the election.

The Riverside Election Integrity Team, a citizen's watchdog group, said it uncovered the discrepancy.

Bianco, a Republican, announced his investigation during his campaign for governor.

Charles W. Dunn told the justices that election law required Bianco to ask District Attorney Mike Hestrin to impanel a grand jury to seek the ballots, or ask the county Board of Supervisors to order an investigation.

"In no event shall the ballots be taken from the custody of the registrar," Dunn said, citing the Election Code.

Florida, hard-hit by Obamacare drop-off, feels the squeeze of

Dunn added that there were other sections of the Election Code “that were run roughshod over.”

Bianco’s attorney, Bradley W. Hertz, argued that the sheriff acted properly.

“Here we have to read (the Code) in context. … It cannot be a universal prohibition against all legal processes,” Hertz said.

Such a strict reading of the Code, Hertz said, “would immunize from investigation.”

In a second case heard Monday, attorneys argued how strictly a statute should be read that the California attorney general supervises county sheriffs and whether Bonta has the power to shut down an investigation such as one over the Proposition 50 ballots.

A majority of voters in the county and state approved the ballot measure, which redrew California’s congressional districts to help Democrats win more seats in the upcoming midterm elections.

County Registrar of Voters Art Tinoco has said the actual gap is much smaller than 45,000 — just 103 votes — and falls well within the acceptable margin of error set by California’s Secretary of State, which oversees elections.

Nonetheless, Riverside County sheriff’s investigators in February and March obtained search warrants to seize Proposition 50 ballots cast in the county. At the time, Bianco — then a Republican candidate for governor — said his team would hand count every ballot to determine if the alleged 45,000-vote gap existed, what caused it and if the cause involved a crime.

Dunn did not object to a recount, if done legally.

“I believe that people who want and can absorb the truth will walk away being fully confident that Mr. Tinoco’s counts can absolutely be relied upon,” Dunn said.

Search warrant applications show Bianco’s department had a running interest in elections, having secured other warrants in 2023 and 2024 for voter data. The warrants taken out this year show sheriff’s investigators in frequent contact with the head of the Riverside Election Integrity Team and others who question the integrity of the county’s vote-counting process.

While voter fraud in the United States is not unheard of, experts say it’s very rare, easily detectable by safeguards and not close to the level needed to influence election results. Many who question election processes also support President Donald Trump, who falsely claims that fraud cost him the 2020 presidential election.

This spring’s ballot seizure triggered a pushback by critics who argued Bianco’s probe was baseless, compromised the ballots’ integrity and threatened to undermine the public’s faith in elections.

Bonta sued to stop the probe, arguing among other things that Bianco ignored his lawful directives. Bianco’s legal team countered that Bonta has no authority to stop California sheriffs from looking into possible criminal wrongdoing.

“They’re entitled to have their point at least heard,” Dunn told the justices. “And the legislature has set out a process for them to do that. (The warrant affidavit) It looks like well-meaning officers essentially trying to build a vote-counting airplane while they’re flying it. This country has, over two centuries, refined the correct way to count ballots in a way that we all ought to be able to have confidence in the result.

“The key harm we allege in this case is whenever a government office engages in a count, whether it’s just the raw number of ballots or whether who is selected on the ballots, when they announce that, some version of the public is going to believe that number. And if it’s inconsistent with the official number, all it does is create paranoia,” Dunn said.

“There are some people who think they have breakfast with Elvis on Sunday; we can’t satisfy them,” Dunn added. “But everyone else who wants to have a genuine inquiry into election results, there are statutes and procedures here that have been ironed out for decades that should have been followed.”

Hertz, Bianco's attorney, said the sheriff is allowed to use affidavits swearing that there was probable cause to believe a crime took place and therefore to seize the ballots. Hertz also described the Penal Code as a "parallel code" to the Election Code.

"We need to know if there was a crime," Hertz said. "We're not trying to overturn the election, so it doesn't fit within the usual Elections Code. There are 46,000 ballots that somehow got introduced into the system improperly. If we say, 'You're not allowed to look at them, Sheriff,' then they're going to be destroyed. Another election cycle will come and go without getting to the truth.

"Then what happens next time?" Hertz continued. "There's 100,000 new ballots, and it does make a difference in the outcome. This is sort of a perfect test case for allowing this factual scenario to play forward with the proper protections. We think the ballots being safeguarded in the sheriff's office is the proper way to proceed."

The dispute has political overtones, with Bonta, a Democrat, accusing Bianco of acting recklessly. Bianco, who plans to run for reelection as sheriff in 2028, blasted Bonta as "an embarrassment to law enforcement."

In April, the Supreme Court paused the investigation pending further legal review, including a look at what authority the attorney general has over sheriffs and whether Bonta is entitled to a court order blocking Bianco's investigation.

The other case involves a lawsuit brought by the UCLA Voting Rights Project — Democratic gubernatorial candidate Xavier Becerra is an adviser — on behalf of four plaintiffs, including Democratic Assembly hopeful and Riverside City Councilmember Clarissa Cervantes.

That lawsuit argued that the seized 650,000 or so ballots should not have been taken from the registrar. In May, Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a law making it illegal to take marked ballots from election officials.

ENVIRONMENT

What is the 10 a.m. rule? Controversial firefighting strategy could be back

BY ROBERT CHANEY, MONTANA FREE PRESS AND MOUNTAIN JOURNAL
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Cal Fire firefighters carry a fire hose up a hillside during the Sandy Fire in Simi Valley on May 18, 2026. Photo by Zin Chiang for CalMatters

Wildfires once ran on deadlines.

After a series of catastrophic blazes in the early 20th century, the U.S. Forest Service sought to show it was able to control and protect forests under its care. In 1933, the agency mandated the **"10 a.m. rule,"** declaring that any wildland fire should be extinguished by 10 a.m. the day after it was reported.



Three men are seated at the entrance of the Signal Peak Fire Lookout near the Madera Sugar Pine Mill in the Sierra National Forest in the early 1900s. Photo via the California State Library

Snuffing all fires quickly, the agency reasoned, would prevent disasters like the Big Burn of 1910. That incident scorched more than 3 million acres along the Montana-Idaho border during a 36-hour rampage, killing at least 85 people and destroying five towns.

Unlike earthquakes or tornadoes, wildfires have weaknesses. We can suppress flames with water or retardant chemicals. Wildland fire crews remove fuels with hand tools and bulldozers. Sometimes they use tactical burnouts — literally fighting fire with fire.

These tools can obscure crucial facts about wildfire and reinforce strategies that can backfire.

Tales of heroism following the Big Burn established the Forest Service as a necessary government service. As ***New York Times* reporter Tim Egan** put it, "To this day, I think that agency owes its existence to this fire."

But Egan also described the consequences of that successful effort to control wildfire: "Actively trying to put out every fire left a lot of standing dead timber. So some of the big fires we had in the latter 20th century, including the Yellowstone fires of 1988 and some of the Idaho fires of the late 1990s, and fires still to come, are the result of having timber that probably should have burned every now and then during the seasonal fires."

Rocky Mountain Research Station scientist David Calkin described the phenomenon as the "**Wildfire Paradox**" in a 2013 article published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. "Using wildfire

suppression to eliminate large and damaging wildfires ensures the inevitable occurrence of these fires," Calkin wrote. "Wildfire suppression, effective 95% to 98% of the time, inevitably leads to ecologically significant wildfires with higher intensities and rapid growth that are unable to be suppressed."

Fire researchers began to notice the paradox in the 1960s, and began implementing "let burn" strategies in remote forests to reduce those fuel loads. The Forest Service modified the "10 a.m. rule" in 1971 to allow some fires to burn, and officially abandoned the policy in 1978.

Over the following decades, wildfire managers adapted to a changing climate, shifting public opinion and funding challenges. A **mid-century moist period** began drying out toward the tail of the 20th century. The 1988 fires in and around Yellowstone National Park burned 1.4 million acres in one of America's best-known landscapes. Colorado's South Canyon fire in 1994 killed 14 wildland firefighters and prompted major federal fire policy reviews. One of the most consequential shifts was the growing focus on the wildland-urban interface, or WUI — the increasing overlap between private homes and fire-prone landscapes.

Several record-breaking fire seasons in the early 2000s made federal budget watchers aware that the Forest Service was spending more to fight fire than almost anything else in its mission, and frequently didn't have enough funding to do so. In 2017, federal wildfire suppression costs topped $2 billion — six times as much as was spent in the 1990s.

The year 2018 produced one of the worst wildfire seasons in history and **included the Camp Fire**, which killed more than 80 people in and around Paradise, California.

More recently, political pressure for a more aggressive response to wildfire has renewed fire suppression.

Last June, President Donald Trump issued an executive order "**Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response**," which in its first sentence declared "The devastation of the January 2025 Los Angeles wildfires shocked the American people and highlighted the catastrophic consequences when State and local governments are unable to quickly respond to such disasters."

Draft versions of the policy included a return to the 10 a.m. rule, according to numerous sources in the wildfire community.

"No one was dumb enough to use 10 a.m. policy language, but there was fear of a fire getting away," said Bobbie Scopa, a 45-year firefighting veteran who worked at the local, state and federal levels and now is vice president of the advocacy group Grassroots Wildland Firefighters. "Anytime you light a fire or purposefully

don’t put out a fire, you own it and you own every bad thing that can happen. You’re taking a risk when you do that.”

Draft versions of the **Fix Our Forests Act** also included a call for full suppression of all wildfires.

Matt Weiner, CEO of the advocacy group Megafire Action, said putting that into law would have had dangerous consequences.

“We were able to get that out of it,” Weiner said. “And long-term, we will push aggressively against the 10 a.m. rule being included in statute anywhere. We don’t want to just create a suppression super-agency. We want a system that recognizes the need for a lot more beneficial fire on the landscape.”

Nevertheless, at a July 22 hearing before the House Subcommittee on Forestry and Horticulture, **Forest Service Chief Tom Schultz told** members of Congress his agency remained committed to prioritizing aggressive initial attack on wildfire this year.

“Keeping fire small protects firefighters, communities and also saves funding,” Schultz said. “I assure you every fire has a full-suppression strategy.”

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