OFFICE OF THE
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Election Concern Referral Memorandum

TO: San Benito County Counsel; San Benito County District Attorney; California Secretary of State, Investigative Services; California Department of Justice, Office of the Attorney General

FROM: Eric Taylor, Sheriff, San Benito County

DATE: November 15, 2026

SUBJECT: Request for assessment and preservation guidance regarding unverified concerns about District 5 ballot duplication

I am referring unverified information concerning the November 3, 2026, election for San Benito County District 5 Supervisor and requesting a coordinated, independent assessment of whether further inquiry is warranted. The concern relates to reported discussions about duplicate ballots and whether those ballots accurately reflect voter intent. The allegations summarized below are secondhand to me, and none has been independently confirmed.

Reported information

The information provided to me concerns a conversation reportedly overheard by a person in the elections office shortly before 11:00 a.m. on November 13, 2026. That person has expressed a preference to remain anonymous.

According to the account relayed to me, election leadership appeared unsettled by the possibility that Rodney Bianchi would overtake Ignacio Velasquez in the District 5 Supervisor race. The account described Velasquez as having maintained the lead since Election Day. These descriptions have not been independently verified for purposes of this referral.

The account also included a rumor that Registrar of Voters Francisco Diaz and others held a closed-door emergency meeting about how to handle the fallout if Velasquez fell behind in the latest count. I have not confirmed that such a meeting occurred, who attended, or what was discussed. It is also unclear which portions of this account the reporting person personally overheard and which were relayed by others.

The reported discussion included references to “damage control” if Velasquez requested a manual count or an audit of “duplicate ballots.” The concern conveyed was that the duplicate ballots might not accurately reflect voters’ intent. I cannot presently attribute these statements to a particular speaker or verify their precise wording or context. No specific original ballot, duplicate ballot, or discrepancy has been identified to me.

SAN BENITO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Eric S. Taylor, Sheriff-Coroner

Disclosure of potential conflict

For transparency, my wife is employed as a Senior Deputy Clerk-Recorder under Francisco Diaz and handled ballot pickups during this election. I disclose these facts because her employment and election duties may create a potential conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict concerning my involvement in this matter. I request that County Counsel, in coordination with the District Attorney and appropriate state authorities, assess whether recusal or other safeguards are warranted and identify an independent agency to lead any review. Pending that guidance, I will refrain from personally directing investigative activity in this matter.

Scope of concern

Ballot duplication is a lawful process used to reproduce ballots that cannot otherwise be processed, while preserving the voter's choices. The existence of duplicate ballots, a change in a candidate's lead, or discussion of a possible recount does not itself establish misconduct. The issue requiring assessment is whether there is a factual basis to believe that any duplicate ballot failed to reflect the original ballot or that anyone knowingly caused or concealed such a discrepancy.

This referral makes no finding that fraud occurred and attributes no wrongdoing to Mr. Diaz, either candidate, or any other person. The information may be incomplete, misunderstood, or inaccurate. Nevertheless, the reported concern about voter intent warrants referral to the appropriate authorities for evaluation.

Requested coordination and guidance

1. Please identify the appropriate agency and point of contact to assess this information independently and determine whether further inquiry is warranted, including any potential conflict considerations arising from allegations involving county election leadership.

2. Please advise promptly on lawful preservation measures and coordinate any appropriate preservation notices. Potentially relevant materials include original and duplicate ballots and their linking identifiers; duplication and adjudication logs; review and chain-of-custody records; relevant ballot images and electronic audit records; and communications, meeting records, or existing surveillance recordings concerning the reported November 13 discussion and related ballot processing. Preservation should maintain lawful custody, ballot secrecy, and record integrity.

3. Please advise how the reporting person may provide a confidential account that distinguishes personal observations from information learned from others. I request that identifying information be limited to those who need it for an authorized review, to the extent permitted by law, and that appropriate steps be taken to protect against retaliation. Absolute anonymity should not be promised.

4. Please advise County Counsel and my office regarding applicable legal requirements, notice obligations, and the lawful scope of any participation by the Sheriff's Office before further investigative steps involving election records, equipment, or processing areas.

This memorandum requests assessment and guidance; it does not direct a recount, seizure, transfer of election materials, or interruption of the canvass. My purpose is to ensure that the concern receives a fair and timely review while protecting voters, election personnel, and the integrity of the election process. Please acknowledge receipt and identify the agency that will coordinate the response.