



PRESS RELEASE

Justice Department Charges 28 Foreign Nationals in California for Election Crimes



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Federal law enforcement throughout California today arrested 11 foreign nationals living in the United States who are among 28 total charged in criminal complaints with federal crimes, including that they fraudulently registered to vote in U.S. elections, electoral contests in which most of them cast illegal and fraudulently obtained ballots.

Today's arrests are part of "Operation Protect the Vote" – a coordinated effort among all four California-based United States Attorney's Offices to combat and root out fraud in U.S. elections and protect electoral integrity.

All 28 foreign nationals charged are lawful permanent residents (LPRs), or "green card" holders. Although LPRs have legal immigration status in the United States, they are not U.S. citizens and are not permitted to vote in U.S. elections.

The criminal charges include making false statements in a naturalization application and some of the defendants also are charged with fraudulent voter registration. Both charges are felonies that carry a maximum penalty of five years in federal prison.

The defendants arrested today are expected to make their initial appearances this afternoon in U.S. District Courts. No pleas will be taken today.

On Oct. 13, the federal government provided a list of these individuals to California to ensure that their vote-by-mail ballots were set aside until these individuals' citizenship status could be confirmed. California declined to assist the federal government in setting aside their ballots, prompting a lawsuit by the United States that seeks a court order to prevent the unlawful dilution of American citizens' votes and to uphold the integrity of our elections.

"Every illegal vote cancels out the vote of a lawful American citizen," said Acting Deputy Attorney General Trent McCotter. "Each of the 28 defendants charged today appears on the list of more than 20,000 likely noncitizen registrants we provided to California election officials last week. California refused to look at that list. Today's charges show exactly what that refusal puts at risk. California must verify the citizenship of those more than 20,000 registrants before mail-in ballots are counted."

"Today's arrests prove what we have been saying," said First Assistant U.S. Attorney Bill Essayli. "California is mailing ballots to noncitizens, and they are refusing to comply with federal law, which makes it a crime for noncitizens to vote. The voting rights of American citizens must be protected."

"Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is committed to protecting the integrity of our nation's electoral process by investigating allegations of criminal conduct that undermine public confidence in our elections," said HSI Acting Executive Associate Director John A. Condon. "Working with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, we will continue to pursue those who knowingly violate federal law, while ensuring that every investigation is conducted fairly, thoroughly, and consistent with due process."

According to court documents, the defendants knowingly and willfully lied under oath in their voter registration applications that they were U.S. citizens to be permitted to vote in California. Their fraudulent voter registration applications were approved, and, in many cases, the defendants illegally voted in recent U.S. elections. They subsequently lied in their paperwork to become naturalized U.S. citizens that they had never claimed U.S. citizenship, nor had they registered to vote or voted in U.S. elections.

Broken down by jurisdiction, the following defendants are charged in today's takedown:

Central District of California

All the following defendants below in this jurisdiction face felony charges,

including false statements in a naturalization application:

- Omar Alexander Muñoz, 72, a Belizean national living in Commerce, California, fraudulently registered to vote in September 2019, claiming his was a U.S. citizen, then voted in U.S. elections in 2020, twice in 2022, and in 2024. He also lied on his application to become a naturalized U.S. citizen when he falsely stated under oath to have never claimed to be a U.S. citizen.
- Amandeep Kaur, 30, an Indian national living in Rancho Palos Verdes, California, and who is seeking to become a U.S. citizen, fraudulently registered to vote in December 2022 and voted in the November 2024 U.S. election.
- Ana Domínguez, 60, a Salvadoran national living in Long Beach, California, fraudulently registered to vote in July 2006 and lied in her naturalization paperwork in March 2026.
- Axel Giovanni Prera García, 46, a Guatemalan national and Pico Rivera, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in 2002 and 2005, and lied in his naturalization paperwork in June 2025.
- Flavio Alejandro Zúñiga, 43, a Mexico national and La Puente, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in 2003 and lied in his naturalization paperwork in February 2026.
- Butleng Taing, 43, a Cambodian national living in Long Beach, fraudulently registered to vote in July 2021, voted in the 2022 and 2024 U.S. elections, and lied on his naturalization paperwork in August 2025.
- Carlos Antonio Galeas, 54, a Honduran national and West Covina, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in 2012 and 2016, then lied in his naturalization paperwork in September 2018.
- Ernest Gutiérrez Ruvalcaba, 57, a Mexican national living in Wilmington, California, fraudulently registered to vote in February 2024 and voted one month later.
- Jesús Narez-Madrigal, 52, a Mexican national living in Carson, California, fraudulently registered to vote in 2014, voted in the 2024 U.S. general election, and lied in his naturalization paperwork in June 2024.
- José Antonio Bañuelos-Díaz, 42, a Mexican national and West Adams, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in 2007 and lied on his naturalization paperwork in March 2025.
- Muhammad Khan, 50, a Pakistani national and Anaheim, California, resident, submitted a provisional ballot in 2020 and lied on his naturalization paperwork five years later.
- Rouzbeh Seyamaknejad, 63, a Canadian national and Rancho Palos Verdes, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in December 2018, lied in his naturalization application in January 2024, and voted in the November 2024 U.S. election.
- Sulema de León, 35, a Mexican national and Long Beach, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in 2013, lied on her naturalization application in 2019, and voted in the November 2020 U.S. general election.

Eastern District of California

The following defendants are charged with voting by an alien in a federal election, a misdemeanor that carries a statutory maximum sentence of one year in federal prison:

- Maricela Nazarín González, 43, a Mexican national living in Clovis, California, registered to vote in 2020, indicating that she was a U.S. citizen, and voted in elections in 2022, twice in 2024, and 2025.
- Rony de Jesús Sicaja, 38, a Guatemalan national living in Fresno, California, fraudulently registered to vote in 2017, and voted in the June 2022 primary election and the November 2024 general election in the United States.
- Camino Giles Jiménez, 51, a Mexican national living in Kerman, California, knowingly voted in three U.S. elections despite knowing he is a noncitizen, the most recent election being the June 2026 primary.
- Juan Antonio Rivas García, 46, a Mexican national and Sacramento, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in 2018 and 2020, both times falsely asserting under oath that he was a U.S. citizen. Rivas voted in the 2022 and 2024 U.S. elections.
- Giezell Viduya Adawag, 41, a Philippines national and Vacaville, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote the day of the November 2024 general election, falsely certified that she was a U.S. citizen, and voted in the election that day.
- Kamlesh Navnitlal Shah, 67, an Indian national living in Sacramento, California, fraudulently registered to vote on the day of the November 2024 general election and voted that day. He is charged via information.

Northern District of California

The following defendants are charged with attempted procurement of

naturalization contrary to law, false statement under oath in any matter relating to naturalization or citizenship, and voting by an alien:

- Verónica Bullene, 43, a.k.a. “Verónica Hernández Martínez” a Mexican national living in Petaluma, California, made false

- Veronica Batten, 40, a.k.a. Veronica Hernandez Martinez, a Mexican national living in Petaluma, California, made false statements on her naturalization application that she had never claimed to be a U.S. citizen when, in fact, she did so under penalty of perjury to register to vote in 2022 and 2023 then voted in 2024.
- David Shapiro, 41, a Georgian national living in San Jose, California, fraudulently registered to vote in 2024 and later voted in a U.S. election, and made false statements on his naturalization application that he had never claimed to be a U.S. citizen.
- Moe Thida Lwin, 57, a Myanmar national and Daly City, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in 2024 and then proceeded to illegally vote in a U.S. citizen. She made false statements on her naturalization paperwork as well.
- Manakotau Mataele Finau, 61, a Tongan national and Hayward, California, resident, fraudulently registered to vote in the 2024 election then vote, then lied about it in naturalization paperwork.
- Maribel del Carmen Garcés Barriga, 62, an Ecuadoran national and San Francisco, California, resident, made false statements in her naturalization paperwork that she never claimed U.S. citizenship and had never voted in a U.S. election or had registered to vote. In fact, Garcés fraudulently registered to vote in 2024 and proceeded to vote in a U.S. election.

Southern District of California

The following defendants are charged with false claim to citizenship to vote, unlawful attempted procurement of naturalization, and false statement under oath in matter relating to naturalization or citizenship:

- José Probitsado Amaro, 51, a citizen of the Philippines living in National City, California, fraudulently registered to vote by falsely claiming to be a U.S. citizen. He then cast a ballot in the November 2024 general election and made false statements during his naturalization interview, denying that he had ever claimed U.S. citizenship and misrepresenting his voting history.
- Jennifer Jung, 31, a Canadian national living in San Diego, California, fraudulently registered to vote by falsely claiming to be a U.S. citizen. She then cast a ballot in the November 2024 general election and made false statements during her naturalization interview, denying that she had ever claimed U.S. citizenship and misrepresenting her voting history.
- Erick Ronaldo Soto Mendizábal, 64, a citizen of Guatemala and former Oceanside, California, resident now living in Moreno Valley, California, fraudulently registered to vote by falsely claiming to be a U.S. citizen. He then cast a ballot in the November 2024 general election and made false statements in his naturalization application, denying that he had ever claimed U.S. citizenship and misrepresenting his voting history.
- Pamele Arbués Line, 56, a citizen of the Philippines living in Escondido, California, registered to vote, cast a ballot in the November 2024 general election, and made false statements in her naturalization interview, denying that she had ever claimed U.S. citizenship and misrepresenting her voting history.

A complaint, indictment, and information merely contain accusations. All defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt in a court of law.

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