

SBC Becoming Ground Zero In Second Trump Era Illegal Migrant Cultural War

A string of seemingly unrelated, semi-related and related events has, apparently, pushed San Bernardino County to the forefront of the controversy over Donald Trump Administration's intensified crackdown on illegal immigration.

A noteworthy element of the matter is the recent sharp reversal in the unexpected leniency toward those present in the country without federal government authoriza-

tion which was evinced by the Inland Empire's leading law enforcement figures last year. This has stirred up a degree of confusion, indeed uncertainty, that has impacted just how outgoing, sociable and willing a significant segment of the community is to interact openly and frequent many public locations or governmental facilities.

The contrast in the attitude and approach of those in the Joseph Biden

Administration with that shown by the functionaries in the Trump Administration regarding the proliferation of undocumented immigrants in the United States was a major focus in the traditional and newfangled media throughout the four years Biden was in office and grew into a pointed issue as first Biden and then Kamala Harris served as the presumptive and then the actual Democratic nomi-

nee in the 2024 presidential election.

At one point during the campaign, Trump had charged that 21 million immigrants had poured across the U.S. borders while Biden was president. Biden's team was willing to concede that the actual number was only half of that, at somewhere between 10 million and 11 million. In the aftermath of Trump's victory over Harris, amplified immigration en-

forcement was widely anticipated, although the extent to which it would occur among the general public was unknown.

In the November 2024 election, the Republicans had secured a trifecta, as Trump's victory was accompanied by the GOP flipping U.S. Senate seats in West Virginia, Ohio and Montana to achieve a 53-47 majority in the upper legislative house while retaining control in the House **See P 2**

Assistant U.S. Attorney Balla Appointed To Victorville Superior Court

Governor Gavin Newsom late last month esigned John Balla, whose relatively short but compact legal caseer is studied with an array of federal law enforcement agency assignments, to serve as a judge in the San Bernardino Superior Court.

According to Governor Newsom's office,

"John Balla, of San Bernardino County, has been appointed to serve as a Judge in the San Bernardino County Superior Court. Balla has served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California since 2024, where he was also an Assistant U.S. Attorney from 2019 to 2024 and a Deputy Chief from 2021 to 2024 and from 2025 to 2026. He served as a Senior Attorney at the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in 2024. Balla served as an Assistant U.S. Attorney at the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of New Mexico from 2015 to 2019. He worked as an Associate at Best, Best & Krieger in 2015. Balla served as a Law Clerk in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas from 2013 to 2015. Balla received a Juris Doctor degree from Boston University School of Law."

"We thank the Governor for this much needed appointment, which allows the court to continue its commitment to meeting the justice needs of San Bernardino County. We look forward to Mr. Balla joining the San Bernardino bench," said Presiding **See P 3**

Wapner's Brand Of Quid Pro Quo Displayed By Airport Safety Chief's Campaign Support

By Mark Gutglueck

Another element of Councilman Alan Wapner's campaign for mayor is vectoring attention to the pay-for-play ethos and graft that has infested politics and governance in Ontario for a generation.

Wapner has been in place on the city council since 1994. Over that more-than-three-decade-long period, he

has proven to be the most generously financially endowed politician among all of San Bernardino County's local elected officials, having received over \$3.2 million in donations to his various political funds, primarily into his city council electioneering war chest.

With some exceptions, the list of the ma-

major donors to Wapner's campaign fund represents a virtual who's who of the entities which have obtained clearance from the City of Ontario for development projects or which have contracts for goods and/or services with or franchises granted by the city or the various governmental agencies/joint powers authorities Mr. Wapner represents or heads.

There is a widespread perception that donating money to Alan Wapner to assist him in perpetuating his political career is a requisite for those who have applications for approval of development projects being considered by the Ontario planning division, business owners who are seeking a contract with the city or those who are competing for a city

franchise if they want the project approved, to obtain the contract or to be granted the franchise.

Accounts abound about Wapner shaking his donors down. This appears to take place after he has mined the lists of the donors to other nearby politicians to find those whom he can himself approach, in so doing skillfully suggesting without saying **See P 5**

Morongo Valley Unified School District Considering School Closures In The Face Of Dwindling Enrollment

Despite the Morongo Unified School District being San Bernardino County's largest school district geographically at 1,342.44 square miles, there are 17 other school districts in the county with a more substantial student enrollment.

With 11 elementary schools, two middle schools and three high

schools, the number of students in the district had climbed to 8,005 at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, when in-class instruction had been suspended because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and hit 9,301 by the end of that school year. Enrollment neared or eclipsed 10,000 before the end of 2021-22 and at

the beginning of 2022-23, but has dropped of since. Prognostication suggest that by 2031, the number of students in the district will have attrited to approximately 6,821.

According to the district, student enrollment reached roughly 10,000 at one point but is down to around 7,300 **See P 3**

Action By The County Board Of Supervisors At This Week's Meeting

The San Bernardino County Behavioral Health Department is entering into an approximately \$1.3 million contract with San Bernardino-based VARP, Inc. and expanded agreements with several community providers to increase access to substance use treatment and recovery services throughout the

county.

The action includes an additional \$800,000 in funding to support services for individuals referred by San Bernardino County Children and Family Services, bringing the total available funding for these services to \$4 million. Providers receiving updated agreements in- **See P 3**

Ontario Chaffey Show Band Will Perform In Town Square Concert On May 11

The musicians of the Ontario Chaffey Community Show Band and the Al & Jennifer Boling Family are proud to present a program entitled "Swing, Swing, Swing" on Monday, May 11, 2026 at 7:30 p.m.

The concert will be held at the Ontario Town Square on Euclid Ave. between "B" & "C" Streets in downtown On-

tario. The Woodwind Celebration Ensemble will present a pre-concert recital at 7:00 p.m. The performance is free to the public.

Attendees are encouraged to bring a lawn chair as the seating is limited.

The concert will feature songs from the "Swing" and "Jazz" eras, including "Let's

Dance," "Leap Frog," "Wood Choppers Ball," "Caravan," "I'll Be Seeing You," "Stomping at the Savoy," "Sentimental Journey," Glenn Miller's "In The Mood," and more! The Show Band will have four accomplished guest performers returning to share the stage - Shelia Ruff, Loren Martinez, Peter Gutierrez and Homero

Chavez.

The Colony High School Orchestra, under the direction of Michael Bachman, will perform with the Show Band for a special tribute to Jazz musician and composer Chuck Mangione.

Also featured will be Show Band solo musicians Steve Collins on Flugelhorn and Director Pat Arnold on vocal and

tenor sax, along with the musicians of the Show Band.

Sheila Ruff has had a lifetime of singing all across the U.S.A. She worked as a vocalist for the Tony Barrasso Orchestra, the Bill Black Combo, and Monte Bleu Orchestra at the Boca Raton Hotel and Dunes Hotel in Las Vegas, and also with Roy **See P 3**

Trump Administration Honchos Knew California, A Self-Declared Sanctuary State, Would Prove A Tough Deportation Nut To Crack, But Believed Inland County Law Enforcement Would Assist It In Getting A Running Start In The Crackdown On Illegal Immigrants *from front page*

of Representatives by a narrow 218-seat to 212-seat advantage. The control of his party over Congress was set to last through until the mid-term election in 2026, and President Trump and his advisors recognized that they would need to strike while the iron was hot and get as much accomplished during the first two years of his second go-round as chief executive, given how closely the Democrats were nipping at the Republicans' heels and a turnaround in which the Democrats might take back one or both houses of Congress in 2026.

Plans were made to hit the ground running shortly after the January inauguration, as Tom Homan, the director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement during the first Trump Administration from 2017 until 2018 was designated to serve as the so-called border czar.

How this effort was to be framed, i.e., represented to the public, was an item of discussion. Even before Trump was sworn in, Democrats were seeking to define the parameters of what was to, during the second Trump Era, constitute an "illegal alien." The deportation effort should be limited to targeting actual criminals, the Democrats reasoned. Only those undocumented foreigners who had been convicted of serious crimes – felonies – should be subject to removal, they suggested, indeed were insisting. Those who were eligible to speak for the incoming Trump Administration, sensing that they were gaining ground in the public debate, went along with this talk, at least ostensibly.

Certainly, they said publicly, they were all for prioritizing expelling those foreigners who had criminal records. They

utilized publicly available Department of Justice figures to enumerate those foreigners from around the country who had felony convictions, in particular those who had either been found guilty in a court of law or had entered guilty pleas to assault, battery, use of threats, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, endangering children, burglary, robbery, theft, fraud, forgery, embezzlement, felony driving under the influence, bribery, escape from prison, trafficking in narcotics, kidnapping, false imprisonment, unlawful possession of a weapon, possession of an explosive device, money laundering and criminal profiteering, torture and mayhem, elder abuse, stalking, rape, any crime resulting in death or great bodily injury and solicitation of a crime. Those so adjudged totaled at least 800,000 around the country.

While those within the inner sanctum of the Trump [team] were willing to let the Democrats believe that the deportations might confine themselves to rooting out one out of every 15 undocumented foreigners in the country, they were doing so only to lull them into complacency so they could effectuate their real plan. Trump and his supporters did not draw a distinction between aliens who had simply found their way into the United States without registering as visitors and those who had been arrested and found guilty.

Inherent in this was a huge philosophical difference between Democrats on one side and Republicans, Trumpist Republicans in particular, on the other. To Democrats, crossing into the United States in secret and hiding from the authorities does not constitute a crime, or, if

it is a crime, is a de minimus one. To Trump and his supporters, sneaking into the country and failing to register with the government is a violation of the Smith Act, which was passed into law on June 28, 1940, nearly six years before Donald Trump was born. Also known as the Alien Registration Act, the Smith Act altered Chapter 439.54 of Statute 67 of 18 U.S. Code § 2385, to, among other things, require all non-citizen adult residents, defined as those over the age of 14, to register with the federal government. Defined as a misdemeanor, it carried with it a penalty of six months in jail and a maximum fine of \$5,000. Obtaining a conviction against a non-citizen on a violating the Alien Registration Act could, theoretically, for federal prosecutors, open the door for deporting the subject. The Trump Administration intended to arrest any foreigner living unregistered in the United States, obtain an expedited conviction against him or her, and then utilize that conviction to establish that person as a criminal and use it as the basis for an equally expedited deportation proceeding.

California, as a self-declared sanctuary state and nation's foremost safe haven for illegal aliens as they were now defined by the incoming administration – 2.7 million of them, became a priority in the intended deportation effort. Fully 22.5 percent of those in the country without authorization were scattered all about the Golden State. If the administration could succeed there, removing more than one out of every five illegal aliens in the country, the overall program's prospect for success would be boosted, as elsewhere, with the possible exception of Texas, the geographical and dispersment issues were not as intense, and both a model of and reputation for success would, they believed, propel the undertaking forward. Were the federal government to allow

itself to be stood off by the Democrat-dominated state government's assertion of sanctuary protection for those defying federal immigration law, giving every undocumented foreigner in California a pass, it would risk creating an incentive for those similarly unlawfully present in the country anywhere else to consider pulling up stakes and moving to California, the Trumpists figured. Even more troublesome was the precedent the Golden State's defiance represented and the chance that by letting Sacramento get away with outmaneuvering Washington, D.C., some order of custom or exemplar would be created for others to do the same. The Trump administration had to take on California, bring all of its authority and might to bear, and establish that it is the federal government, not the states, that had the last word when it comes to immigration. Senate Bill 54, also known as the California Values Act, passed in 2017, put in place California's Sanctuary Law, prohibiting police from participating in immigration enforcement, but gave them "discretion" to cooperate with federal immigration authorities if the subjects they knew or suspected to be undocumented immigrants were to be released from custody after having been convicted of and served a sentence for a series of serious felonies. As the Trump Administration's plan was taking shape, an emerging question was whether law enforcement authorities in sufficient numbers in those areas of the state where there were substantial concentrations of illegal immigrants would adhere to federal law or state law, specifically the California Values Act/California Sanctuary Law. That dynamic carried with it the prospect of the goals of the Trump immigration policy succeeding or failing. Ideally, the administration wanted to log an impressive number of arrests and deportations in California's two most

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iconic locates – Los Angeles and San Francisco. That was undoable, however. It went without saying that the Trump Administration could not count upon the county sheriffs in Los Angeles County or San Francisco County nor the San Francisco Police Department nor the vast majority of the municipal police departments in Los Angeles County to assist in the round-up of illegal aliens within their jurisdictions.

Looking over their options with regard to which among California's ten most-inhabited counties other than the nearly 13-million population Los Angeles County would be likely to prove most supportive of its agenda and have a political leadership willing to interpret federal policy as trumping Senate Bill 54/the California Values Act/California Sanctuary Law, they concluded that their best bet was with, in descending order, 920,000-population Kern County, 2.2 million-population San Bernardino County, 2.5 million-population Riverside County, 1 million-population Fresno County, 3.2 million-population Orange County, 3.3 million-population San Diego County, 1.6 million population Sacramento County, 1.9 million-population Santa Clara County and 1.6 million-population Alameda County. Factors in the analysis of where the first phase of what was to become known as Operation Alta California extended to the anticipated cooperation

of local officialdom; how target-rich of an environment it would prove, meaning, essentially, the concentration of illegal aliens within the population; the sheer numbers of illegal aliens, such that if the effort proved successful the numbers arrested, processed and actually deported would prove impressive. It was ultimately decided that when the federal government was to kick off Operation Alta California in late February or March 2025, it would be concentrated on San Bernardino County and Riverside County, where there were, 127,681 and 132,324 known/suspected illegal aliens residing respectively.

San Bernardino County is one of what is considered five remaining bastions of Republicanism in California. Four of its five county supervisors are Republicans. The majority of votes for state or federal legislators cast in San Bernardino County are for Republicans. Though there is a concentration of Democratic voters in the belt stretching from Fontana eastward through Bloomington, Colton, Rialto, Muscoy and into San Bernardino, such that Democrats tend to get into office to represent those areas, in most places elsewhere in the county the Republican to Democratic ratio is more even and far greater Republican voter turnout has resulted in those areas, by lopsided margins, being represented by politicians who are Republican

Continued on Page 4

Chaffey Community Show Band Performing At Ontario Outdoor Venue May 11 *from front page*

Orbison and Elvis Presley.

Loren Martinez has performed as a vocal soloist for various theater companies and choirs all over the United States. She has over a decade of experience in music education and is currently a music teacher in the Alta Loma School District, and she is also the choir director at Water of Life

Community Church in Fontana, California.

Peter Gutierrez is a 2023 graduate of California State Polytechnic University at Pomona with a degree in music performance on trumpet. Peter is in high demand and has performed throughout the United States and in Europe. He has played in various venues, including

Disneyland, Sea World, Legoland, and other venues. He has also played with the Blue Note Swing Orchestra in Italy, France and Spain.

Homero Chavez is a world-renowned drummer, percussionist, producer, band leader, and educator. He was born in El Paso and over the years has developed into an innovative musician, instrument designer, band leader and clinician.

In addition, brass in-

strument students from the Ontario Montclair School District and Mountain View School District will be honored as recipients of the Jack Mercer Brass Scholarship. They are trumpeter's Ian Santos, Tyler Welcome and Luca Rosales, and Theodore Williamson on trombone. Each student will perform a short musical selection.

Please be sure to join us for our tribute to the Swing and Jazz eras, and

do not forget to invite your family and friends! You can also support the Show Band by visiting and feeding our Hungry Tuba. The concert will be broadcast on local Ontario cable Channel 3. Check your cable listings for the date and time.

The Ontario Chaffey Community Show Band was founded in 1985 by R. Jack Mercer and is now under the direction of Mr. Patrick Arnold and assistant directors David Schaafsma and

David Grasmick. Band members represent at least two dozen communities throughout Southern California. Adult musicians and students are invited to participate. Rehearsals are held on Monday evenings from 7 to 9:00 p.m. at the Chaffey High School Jack Mercer Band Room. The band performs monthly concerts on the campus of Chaffey High School as well as at other venues *Continued on Page 7*

Board Of Supervisors Give Go-Ahead To Spending On Various Social, Mental Health And Public Health Programs *from front page*

clude High Desert Child, Adolescent and Family Services Center, Inland Behavioral and Health Services, Inland Valley Drug and Alcohol Recovery Services and Cedar House Life Change Center.

These services include early intervention, outpatient care and long-term recovery support, helping residents in need access treatment earlier

and maintain recovery over time.

By increasing access to substance use disorder treatment and recovery services for individuals and families in need, the county is furthering the county's wellness goals.

The San Bernardino County Public Health Department received an approximately \$669,000 grant award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Ser-

vices to support the Ending the HIV Epidemic initiative through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program through February 28, 2027.

The funding will support comprehensive health care and support services for individuals living with HIV, including medical care, case management, treatment linkage, food assistance and transportation services across San Bernardino and Riverside counties. The program serves approximately 1,980 clients annually and focuses on improv-

ing access to care and reducing new HIV infections.

By ensuring that individuals living with HIV have access to high-quality health care and support services, the county is working towards meeting its social and governance goals.

The San Bernardino County Registrar of Voters entered into a grant revenue agreement with the California Secretary of State to receive up to approximately \$243,000 in Help America Vote Act funding for enhanced election secu-

rity and administration through Dec. 31.

The funding will support a range of security improvements, including strengthening cybersecurity systems, upgrading physical security at election facilities, enhancing staff training on security and privacy protocols, and improving the county's ability to respond to potential election-related incidents. The grant reimburses eligible costs associated with safeguarding voting systems, protecting sensitive voter data and ensuring the integrity of

election operations.

The program builds on ongoing efforts to modernize election infrastructure and maintain secure, accessible voting processes for residents.

The board approved having the county join a regional energy consortium by entering into a \$5,000 membership agreement with the University of California, Riverside's Southern California Research Initiative for Solar Energy/Solar Valley Consortium for the 2026-27 term *Continued on Page 7*

Morongo Valley School District Contemplating School Campus Closures *from front page*

now.

Schools within the district consist of Condor Elementary School in Twentynine Palms, located on the grounds of the US Marine Corps Base; Friendly Hills Elementary School; Joshua Tree Elementary School; Landers Elementary School; Morongo Valley Elementary School; Oasis Elementary School in

Twentynine Palms; Onaga Elementary School in Yucca Valley; Palm Vista Elementary School in Twentynine Palms; Twentynine Palms Elementary School; Yucca Mesa Elementary School, which offers instruction from Kindergarten to the 8th grade; Yucca Valley Elementary School along with La Contenta Middle

School in Yucca Valley; Twentynine Palms Junior High School, which was the original all purpose elementary, junior high and high school in the town in the 1950s, as well as Twentynine Palms High School, Yucca Valley High School and Black Rock Continuation High School,

The Palm Vista, Landers and Morongo Valley elementary schools have fewer than 350 students each and at present are receiving

in per diem reimbursements for those students' daily attendance an amount of money from the state that in total is less than what it is costing the district to operate them.

SchoolWorks Inc., a consulting firm retained by the district, has suggested that the district close at least one and perhaps all three of the underattended schools as well as, perhaps, Friendly Hills. This would require that the district

defray the cost of bus- sington students a considerable distance to the next closest campus, including six busses roughly 16 miles from back and forth from Landers to Joshua Tree six days a week.

Some parents, students and teachers at or associated with the schools tentatively targeted for closure have expressed opposition to the closure option.

In January, the district formed an enrollment

advisory committee.

Between that committee, SchoolWorks Inc., Superintendent Patricio Vargas and other senior district staff, options on how the district should deal with the declining enrollment have been outlined. While campus closures are not the only solution, according to Vargas the most sensible way of approaching the matter is to contemplate the closure of at least one of the schools by August *Continued on Page 7*

Balla Had Varied Prosecutorial And Oversight Assignments As U.S. Attorney And Lawyer For the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco And Firearms *from front page*

Judge Rod Cortez.

In reverse chronological order, Balla prior to the end of March spent the last year and five months in Riverside as the assistant United States attorney in the

Central District of California, working primarily in the criminal appeals section of the office but also handling or supervising other attorneys in handling incoming cases. From January 2026 to April of 2026 he was doing double duty as the deputy chief of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Riverside, heading the Criminal Appeals Section. From January 2024 until December of 2024 he was the senior attorney functioning within the Bureau of Alcohol

Tobacco and Firearms Los Angeles office. Previous to that, Balla spent a total of eight years and three months as an assistant United States attorney in various locales including serving as the deputy chief of the Riverside branch of the U.S. Attorney's Office from May 2021 until January 2024 and as assistant U.S. attorney in Riverside from January 2019 to January 2021; as assistant U.S. attorney in the Las Cruces Branch of the United States At-

torney's Office in New Mexico from 2015 until 2019; and as a law clerk for District Judge Marina Garcia Marmolejo in Laredo, Texas from 2013 to 2015.

Balla was a member of the U.S. attorney's office when it became involved in the FBI's investigation into the bombings of two churches in Las Cruces, a case in which the FBI is still laboring to identify the person, or people, responsible.

Those bombings took

place at around 8:20 a.m. on Sunday, August 2, 2015, when a device at the Calvary Baptist Church detonated, followed, about 20 minutes later, by a detonation at the Holy Cross Catholic Church in Las Cruces. No one was injured in either of the blasts, and the damage was minor. The FBI has been functioning on the assumption that the explosions were related.

Ballas employment with Best Best & Krieger was brief, during his

departure as Judge Marmolejo's attorney.

The San Bernardino Superior Court appointment and an assessed officers. Fulfilling this need, court public confidence in the judicial system.

Judge Balla fills the vacancy left by the Court of Appeal.

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When Bianco & Dicus Did Not Come Through With The Backing For Operation Alta California The Trump Administration Anticipated, It Had To Go To Plan B And Then Plan C, Which Bugged Down As It Met Widespread & Coordinated Resistance
from page 2

cans rather than Democrats. Both the sheriff of San Bernardino County, Shannon Dicus, and the District Attorney, Jason Anderson, are Republicans. In Riverside County, Democrats have made strides in recent years in evening themselves with the once far-more-dominant Republicans, but both the sheriff, Chad Bianco, and the District Attorney, Mike Hestrin, are Republicans.

Trump officials looked forward or actually took for granted that Dicus, as the sheriff in 2,195,611-population San Bernardino County, and Bianco, as the sheriff in 2,478,600-population Riverside County, would offer them the unfettered cooperation of the law enforcement machinery at their command. Federal officials well understood that getting the cooperation of law enforcement in both Riverside County, the fourth largest such jurisdiction in California, and San Bernardino County, the fifth largest county population-wise in California, and thereby collaring a substantial number of the more than a quarter of a million undocumented foreigners within those two combined 27,406-square mile confines would prove to be a major coup in the immigration control battle.

The architects of the strategy believed, or at least hoped, that when word of what was taking place spread within the subcommunity of illegal aliens, many of those not yet caught would elect to leave both San Bernardino County and Riverside County for the geographically smaller but far more densely populated 4,083-square mile Los Angeles County. This, it was again hoped, would harden the attitude of the residents of Los Angeles County against the overall population of illegal

aliens/undocumented immigrants, further pressuring the state's overwhelmingly Democratic elected leadership to move closer toward the Republican position with regard to immigration. Foremost in this regard was the prospect that the Democrats might choose to abandon or rescind the state's amnesty declaration, which would result in large numbers of county sheriff's departments and municipal police departments joining the federal fold in the effort to wholesale arrest the more than 2.7 million illegal immigrants/undocumented aliens in California.

The assumption that San Bernardino County and Riverside County would go along with the master plan was one that was logically arrived at. While California is overwhelmingly Democratic in its politics generally – with every state constitutional office from governor to lieutenant governor to state attorney general to secretary of state to controller to superintendent of public instruction to insurance commissioner held by a Democrat, 31 out of 40 seats in the California Senate and 60 of 80 in the California Assembly filled by Democrats, U.S. senators from California being Democrats and 43 of its 52 members of the California delegation to the U.S. House of Representatives being Democrats – there yet remain patches within the 163,696-square mile, 58-county Golden State that defy the trend.

A major law enforcement official in a somewhat smaller but nevertheless-Republican-leaning region of the state lying further to the north, Amador County Sheriff Gary Redman, gave indication of where he stood just as Donald Trump was assuming the presidency for the second time, publicly

stating he was ready to defy the solid Democratic political block in Sacramento and break California law by immediately contacting immigration authorities upon his department arresting anyone who appeared to be in the country illegally. According to Redman, he believed he had a duty to uphold local, state and federal law and that hierarchy, federal law overrode state law. With Redman unabashedly maintaining that he stood ready to ensure that every last one of the known or suspected 805 illegal aliens in 41,115-population Amador County would be hunted down and removed from the territory over which he had law enforcement authority, Trump's people assumed Dicus and Bianco were patriots indistinguishable from Redman, and would back their commander-in-chief with no less intensity.

Just as the Trump Administration was putting the final touches on the Operation Alta California plan of operation, what was to be an intense blitzkrieg across the internal swathe of Southern California east of Los Angeles County, one that was to move with such alacrity that it could not be resisted, Bianco went south on them.

The Trump Administration had designated April 10 as D-Day for the unfolding of its comprehensive plan to detain, process and repatriate to their native lands those who were failing to abide U.S. immigration law.

On February 6, 2025, Bianco, who 11 days later would announce he was to make a gubernatorial run in 2026, publicly stated that his deputies "have not, are not and will not engage" in immigration enforcement. He insisted the public upsurge in concern over California law enforcement agencies' cooperation with the federal government's immigration authorities was a reaction to "disingenuous" and sensationalistic media coverage of "ir-

responsible" statements and "misinformation and fear-mongering from dishonest politicians, social media [and] immigration activists."

Bianco's defection from a plan he had not officially signed onto but which it was assumed he was lined up with necessitated discarding what was shaping into Plan A and an accompanying delay. The Inland Empire remained as the primary early focus of Operation Alta California, with officials intending to nearly double the manpower that would go into an intensive effort to locate virtually every one of the 127,681 unregistered foreigners residing in San Bernardino County, with lightning strikes where they lived, worked, worshiped, congregated and shopped. There would be no sanctuary. No one and no place was to be off limits or spared and stores, churches, public buildings and facilities including courts and the Mexican and Guatemalan consulates in downtown San Bernardino were fair game.

All order of preparations had been made, with equipment, material, supplies and vehicles being staged near and on federal owned or leased properties and parking lots for or land surrounding post offices, the Loma Linda Veterans Administration Hospital, Federal Aviation Administration facilities, IRS offices, Social Security field offices, military facilities, the Seven Oaks Dam as well as arsenals including those jointly operated with the California National Guard.

Word was passed to the sheriff's department that dozens or even scores of its personnel would be monopolized in operations coordinated with federal officials beginning as early as March 27 and that the county would be eligible to file for reimbursement to cover deputies' overtime. Just before initiation of the enforcement program, on March 25, Sheriff Dicus put out a statement on Instagram, crossing the Trump Administration up. He in-

formed those following him, "We understand that many in our community have concerns about immigration practices in San Bernardino County as they relate to the sheriff's department. I want to assure everyone that our primary duty is to protect all community members, regardless of immigration status. As sheriff of San Bernardino County, my commitment is to public safety and the rule of law. Collaboration with our federal partners plays an essential role in addressing crime and protecting our communities. California Senate Bill 51 currently governs how state and local law enforcement agencies interact with federal immigration authorities. It limits cooperation between local law enforcement and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (I.C.E.) As a law enforcement agency, we are committed to upholding the laws of California." Dicus's statement continued, "If someone is a victim of a crime, their legal status does not affect our response. We are here to help. We do not ask about immigration status or require proof of citizenship to file a report or initiate an investigation. Our focus is on ensuring safety and justice for everyone in our community. I have been meeting with community members to listen to their concerns and ensure that we address any issues affecting their safety and wellbeing." At a critical juncture, just as the Trump Administration was to initiate action to back up its pledge to bring the illegal immigration crisis the president insisted the nation faces under control, Bianco and Dicus indicated they weren't going to buck the California system by cooperating with the federal government in moving forward with the Trump Administration's departure from the Biden Administration's laissez-faire immigration policy. This entailed yet another delay and the discarding of Plan B and the formulation of Plan C.

Ultimately, when Operation Alta California got under way, it was initially focused on Los Angeles, greater Los Angeles and Los Angeles County, locales where the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement were less than welcome, along with two other locales where federal agents counted on and received a more hospitable welcome, Kern County and Amador County. Despite the deployment of a massive amount of manpower, the kickoff and continuing application of Operation Alta California proved to be far less effective and much more problematic than the Trumpsters had hoped for.

Despite the support for and lack of opposition to the roundups in Kern and Amador counties, the numbers were less than impressive when the operation began in April 2025. In Kern County, a task federal force spearheaded by 65 Border Patrol Agents managed to find and take into custody 78 illegal aliens in the initial push, fewer than the number of arrestees the architects of Operation Alta California had expected to capture in the first hour of the effort in either San Bernardino or Riverside counties. In Amador County, agents made slow but decent progress, netting just under one-fifth of the 805 illegal aliens residing there in the first five days they were in action before they were summoned to Los Angeles County in mid-April.

Dicus's and Bianco's withdrawal of support meant the Trump Administration's plans to score a spectacular psychological victory by an effective show of intensified immigration law enforcement in the Inland Empire and then mushrooming outward in the Spring of 2025 throughout the state was not achieved. Instead, the actual enforcement/deportation program went forward in a somewhat unbalanced and uneven fashion, achieving a few

Erwin Advanced At Omnitrans, Where Wapner Was The Board President, And Is Now Safety And Compliance Chief At Ontario International Airport, Where Wapner Is Top Political Dog *from front page*

so explicitly but nonetheless suggesting that if they do not enlarge their largesse to include him, their next efforts to obtain project approvals or obtain governmental contracts or get or retain their governmentally-granted franchises will not go so well.

Those who put it politely describe Wapner as being extremely transactional in his approach to governance and his duty as an elected official and politician. Those who speak more bluntly characterize him as being on the take, entangled in quid pro quos or receiving bribes and kickbacks. Essentially what is alleged and the way it appears is that he is willing to accept political donations – generally substantial political donations – in exchange for action taken in his capacity as both an elected official and appointed official, involving votes on the Ontario City Council as well as a member of the Ontario International Airport Authority, the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority, the Omnitrans board and the boards of the other regional and adjunct governmental joint powers authorities on which he serves.

Part and parcel with all of that is the widespread perception that the staff members of the city and the agencies Mr. Wapner oversees are absolutely aware of his approach to governance and are now and have been for years complicit in the way he does business. That is, what is suggested or outright said to be the case is that these staff members assist him in shutting the door on those applicants or contractors or consultants who do not play ball by donating money to Wapner's campaigns and opening the door for those who assist him in his electioneering efforts.

For their part in Wap-

ner's exploitation of his constituents and the voters who had placed their trust in him, the employees of the city, the airport authority, the county transportation agency, Omnitrans and the other regional and adjunct governmental joint powers authorities on which he serves earn for themselves not only his gratitude but job security and augmented with promotions and raises.

Emerging in the run-up to the upcoming 2026 Ontario mayoral race is Barbara Erwin, who is currently the operations safety coordinator at Ontario International Airport.

Erwin was formerly the safety and security regulations compliance officer with Omnitrans, in which capacity she was provided with \$384,276 in total annu that year hosted a al compensation, including salary, overtime, perquisites and pay ad-ons and benefits, in 2022,

That year, Wapner was vying for reelection. Erwin, in a gesture of support, hosted what is referred to as a "coffee," at which she introduced members of the community, in particular ones who were in a financial position to assist Wapner in funding his campaign. Wapner was handily reelected in the November 2022 election.

Erwin in 2023 left the employ of Omnitrans. Subsequently, she was hired by the Ontario International Airport Authority to serve as the safety and compliance officer at Ontario International Airport.

Erwin is once again hosting coffees for Wapner, this time in support of his run for mayor.

People analyzing the circumstance have noted that Erwin's ascendancy into a very lucrative position with Omnitrans took place during Wapner's tenure as an Omnitrans board member and

while he was serving in the capacities of what is variously described as vice-president, vice-chairman, president or chairman of the Omnitrans board.

When she left Omnitrans, Erwin landed very shortly thereafter the position of operations safety coordinator at Ontario International Airport/Ontario International Airport Authority, which is overseen by a board on which, since its formation in 2012, Alan Wapner has been the only president.

There are multiple competing explanations for Erwin's run of professional advancements over the last decade. One is that her holding of the safety direction positions with an entity over which Wapner has authority, her support and endorsement of his electoral campaigns, her assistance of his efforts to raise money to advance him in his political career and her landing of another lucrative position with an entity over which Wapner has authority is a coincidence.

Another interpretation of the situation is that Erwin is a competent professional, well-established as a safety systems expert and safety policy administrator, and that Wapner, in his capacity as an Omnitrans board member, was in a position to recognize her talent, skill level and work ethic, and therefore jumped at the chance, as the head of the airport authority, to either lure her away from Omnitrans to come to work at Ontario International Airport or hire her when she left Omnitrans. At the same time, there are other interpretations of what occurred, a few of which are far less complimentary and flattering toward Erwin and Wapner.

Under one such account, Erwin had promoted and acceded to the position she had at Omnitrans because of her willingness to assist Wapner in his shakedowns of political donors interested in getting work or lucrative contracts with Omnitrans and after she left that position he hired her

to come over to the Ontario International Airport Authority because he could and now does count on her to assist him in shaking down political donors and potential political donors who can serve as vendors or service providers or consultants to the airport authority or who have and want to retain or who want to obtain franchises granted by the airport authority board.

Some, particularly those who have a positive and optimistic estimation of humanity in general or just prefer to look on the bright side of things, are inclined to accept the former interpretation. Erwin's recent hosting of coffees intended to benefit his mayoral run – opportunities to introduce him to members of the community and, in particular, donors or potential donors – has pushed many others in the Ontario community to the opposite conclusion.

It is widely recognized that Wapner is not shy about using city employees or members of the staffs of the adjunct agencies he oversees as a board member as "campaign volunteers." Some have questioned how voluntary that function is and it is cited as a further example of his transactional approach to governance, such that individuals like Erwin are promoted to lucrative assignments with the city or agencies Wapner oversees in exchange for assistance in his reelection efforts.

An implication of this circumstance is that some city employees and some of the staff of the joint powers authorities or agencies Wapner oversees as a board member are prized and valued less on the strength of their competence and ability than for their willingness to engage in political activity aimed at keeping Wapner in office. By extension, a conclusion that can be drawn is that in some cases, at least, the City of Ontario or Ontario Airport or the San Bernardino County Transportation Authority or Omnitrans or other

agencies Wapner has led are not employing the best and most qualified individuals in the positions they hold but rather those who are most loyal to the politicians who oversee them.

In the case of Erwin, it has been suggested that she is a prime example of this corruption of governance, given that her capacity/title at Ontario International Airport is that of "safety and compliance officer," and she is fulfilling her assignment as a compliance officer in that she is allowing Wapner to engage in multiple depredations which include traveling extensively at the expense of the airport authority/taxpayers while engaged in activity that has nothing to do with airport-related or airport authority-related business as well as utilizing airport authority staff to engage in political campaign-related activity. As the airport's and airport authority's compliance officer, they say, Erwin should be ensuring that the airport's operational and ethical rules and regulations are understood and obeyed by all personages from the top of the chain of command to the bottom.

The Sentinel asked Erwin to go on record with regard to how she has become the center of attention as Wapner's campaign is opening up and the corners he is cutting and more serious abuses of his authority are coming into the limelight.

Erwin declined to confirm that she had assisted Wapner in his past political campaigns and that she is now involved in his current mayoral campaign. Erwin was unwilling to discuss whether her promotions at Omnitrans or her hiring at Ontario International Airport had come about partially or wholly as a consequence of assistance she had provided, while she was employed with Omnitrans, to Wapner's campaign donors and obstructing those who would not or did not donate to his political campaigns.

Erwin did not respond

to questions as to whether assisted Airport authority.

The Sentinel's question to Erwin board president and engaging in a involved between her hiring and political campaigns.

Similarly, Erwin disregarded a tario International Airport Authority

Erwin did not venture a response International Airport Authority a

Erwin was unwilling to say wh

Erwin declined to get into a di for the mayoral position he is see portunity to provide an inventory agencies that he oversaw or overs

Bianco's & Dicus's Defection From The Trump Team Proved Crippling, At Least Temporarily, As Federal Courts In California Restrained The Alien Roundup Until The Supreme Court Took Those Fetters Off

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impressive hits and an equal or even greater number of spectacular misses.

Having to start cold and operate primarily in Los Angeles and its immediately surrounding communities proved highly problematic.

In early April 2025, then-Attorney General Pam Bondi issued directives to those offices of the U.S. Attorneys around the country where there are heavy saturations of illegal aliens within their jurisdictions to have personnel familiar with immigration statutes in place to initiate criminal cases against those in the country illegally and to start the deportation process. She told the U.S. Justice Department's attorneys that they should in all cases where the facts will support them charge any foreign nationals who are not registered with the Immigration and Naturalization Service with failing to register, authorizing the use of "all available criminal statutes to combat the flood of illegal immigration," including making use of the FBI, U.S. Marshals, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. On April 11, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Department of Homeland Security and the Justice Department issued notices that the provision of the Alien Registration Act requiring all non-citizen adult residents of the age of 14 and above to register with the federal government was henceforth to be enforced.

In Los Angeles, where there is a heavy concentration of undocumented aliens and something on the order of one in every 17 people is an illegal

alien, federal agents were remarkably successful in locating and encircling those they were targeting, initiating stops and detaining not just those they had moved in on but others who betrayed themselves as possible illegal aliens by attempting to leave abruptly or flea altogether.

At the same time, however, those being targeted began to engage in all forms of resistance, both active and passive, which created hazards and other dangers. Those in the country illegally and their advocates and supporters made use of technology and modern forms of communication to coordinate that resistance. This resulted in federal officials, agents and employees countering those tactics with the application of technology and techniques of their own. Federal officials accused immigrants of violating the law in their efforts to elude capture. Federal agents were accused of skirting constitutional protections in their zeal to achieve deportation quotas.

By June 4, 2025 there were massive shows of public resistance to the raids, primarily in Los Angeles and Los Angeles County. Huge public protests materialized in the areas where workplace arrests were taking place or near federal buildings. This complicated the function of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. Initially, federal officials were baffled by the rapid turnout of crowds and interference in their operations, but within days they learned that those targeted for deportation enforcement were making use of a communication network to stay one step ahead of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Department (ICE) and the Border Patrol, consisting of social media platforms, apps,

encrypted messaging, maps tracking federal agents' locations. These digitized anti-detention programs, such as ICE-Block and the Rapid Response Network employed a succession of hotlines via phone numbers those in Southern California were able to call or text to report sightings of federal officers so that individual migrants could be signaled to leave or stay out of a specified area or building where raids were ongoing or about to take place. Similarly, the Mexican government created an app, ConsulAppContigo, to facilitate communications between Mexican citizens and Mexican consular officials to contact the family members of those taken into custody and arrange for their legal assistance. Immigration and Customs Enforcement teams engaged in operations aimed at specific places and targets, such as workplaces employing large numbers of undocumented workers and in "roving raids" in which they patrolled the urban environment, on the lookout for individuals or groups of people who matched criteria associated with illegal aliens, making stops of them and taking them into custody if they could not offer documentation, proof, evidence or an indicator of U.S. citizenship. According to civil libertarians and attorneys specializing in Fourth Amendment rights, such tactics skirted the U.S. Constitution, at least with regard to U.S. Citizens, whose rights are guaranteed under the Constitution, and in theory a violation of the rights of anyone in the country, whether they are here legally with visas or legal-residency-granting green cards or not.

The Trump Administration asserted, with some though not an overwhelming degree of evidence, that the resistance was organized and coordinated, aggressive and potentially or actually violent and dangerous. On June 7, over the

objections of California Governor Gavin Newsom, President Trump called upon the California National Guard to assist with maintaining order as crowds of protesters and resisters began throwing rocks, bricks and bottles at ICE agents and overturning vehicles in Los Angeles. Some 700 national guardsmen were dispatched to hotspots around Los Angeles. After a degree of back and forth, President Trump relented, instead sending over 700 Marines from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marines stationed at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms to specific locations in Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Orange counties to "protect federal personnel and federal property in the greater Los Angeles area." Subsequently, with the spectacle of Marines on patrol in the nation's second largest city sinking in on all concerned, the Marines 2nd Battalion was withdrawn and were replaced with 300 National Guardsmen. Thereafter, the American Civil Liberties Union and Public Counsel, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights and the Immigrant Defenders Law Center took up the cause of three immigrants, a single U.S. citizen and a dual U.S./Mexican citizen – Pedro Vasquez Perdomo, Carlos Alexander Osorto, Isaac Antonio Villegas Molina, Jason Brian Gavidia and Jorge Luis Hernandez Viramontes – who had been taken into custody by the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement in May. United States District Court Judge Maame Ewusi-Mensah Frimpong in July 2025 granted a temporary restraining order against the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Border Patrol to prevent it from carrying out further raids based on Judge Frimpong's conclusion that targeting individuals for questioning, detention

or arrest relating to immigration law violation based on their place of work, their presence in a particular place, their ethnicity or race, the type of work they were engaged in and their language or accent was a violation of their constitutional rights. When the Trump Administration appealed to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, the panel consisting of justices Marsha Berzon, Jennifer Sung and Ronald Gould upheld Judge Frimpong. Ultimately, however, the U.S. Supreme Court on appeal in September rejected in a 6-to-3 ruling the lower courts' conclusions that federal officials were engaged in a "racist deportation scheme," accepting the Trump Administration's assertion that federal agents working in Southern California, where 71 percent of the illegal immigrants originated in Latin America, were not engaging in discriminatory behavior by considering the speaking of Spanish to be a criterion distinguishing undocumented aliens from the native population or concentrating their patrols in or around businesses which have a demonstrated prior history of employing or attracting individuals in the country illegally. Similarly, challenges to the Trump Administration's immigration enforcement efforts around the country, most notably in Portland, Oregon, Chicago and Washington, D.C., while initially successful, faltered when they progressed to higher courts. Based upon its victories in the Perdomo and other cases, federal authorities found themselves at liberty to utilize the National Guard as a martial element in the immigration control program. At one point, the Trump Administration moved to send members of the California National Guard to quell civil disturbances relating to immigration enforcement in Oregon. President Trump himself and senior members of his administration grew resentful of the unwillingness of local political

and local law enforcement officials to assist in carrying out federal immigration policy. Especial indignation was reserved for both Bianco and Dicus, Republicans both, over how they had betrayed their commander-in-chief just as he was about to embark on what many believed would prove to be the signature undertaking of his second term in office. The need to rely on the National Guard and the U.S. military to ensure that the law could be applied in a civilian context, giving the president's opponents and detractors to paint him and his team as engaging in a heavyhanded violation of civil liberties had stymied the president in delivering on a key commitment he had made during the 2024 election.

Caught between the negative publicity of calling upon the National Guard and the U.S. Military for the provision of security and back-up to the Department of Homeland Security in its domestic operations and the refusal of local law enforcement agencies in California to maintain order and a shield of protection around agents engaged in illegal alien apprehension operations to prevent protesters from interfering in arrests, federal agents took creative approaches to confronting those they were targeting for arrest to avoid confrontations that might decline into violence. One such tactic was to move in on those targets in locations or under circumstances where both those being taken into custody and any others present would be disinclined or ill-positioned to resist or interfere. One such setting was at courthouses, including in their parking lots, on the grounds immediately adjacent or in front of them or within them.

Unsurprisingly, advocates for undocumented aliens and others found this objectionable. A Department of Homeland Security policy put in place by the Barack Obama Administration

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