

California State Senate

CAPITOL OFFICE
STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 305
SACRAMENTO, CA 95814
TEL (916) 651-4016
FAX (916) 651-4916

SENATOR.GROVE@SENATE.CA.GOV

SENATOR
SHANNON GROVE
SENATE REPUBLICAN LEADER
SIXTEENTH SENATE DISTRICT

DISTRICT OFFICES
5701 TRUXTUN AVE., SUITE 150
BAKERSFIELD, CA 93309
TEL (661) 323-0443
FAX (661) 323-0446

7248 JOSHUA LANE
YUCCA VALLEY, CA 92284
TEL (760) 228-3136
FAX (760) 228-2462



September 29, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor
State of California
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom:

Yesterday, during your daily noon press briefing, you were asked by a member of the press about the \$35 million voter outreach contract that Secretary of State (SOS), Alex Padilla, entered into with a firm that touts itself as belonging to “Team Biden.” You responded to this inquiry by suggesting that you were unaware of this contract.

I am writing to you today to make you aware of this problematic and questionable contract and to ask that your Administration intervene to not only cancel the contract, but to investigate the legality and appropriateness of the contract.

In the attached article from the *Sacramento Bee*, you will find two statements from officials within your administration that seems to call into question the legality of the contract and well as questions from both of us regarding the appropriateness of the contract, given the political bias of the firm selected for the contract.

First, the SOS, is using money for the purpose of a “voter outreach” campaign that is actually intended to help counties with administering an all vote by mail (VBM) election. Clearly, the money was not provided to the counties for this purpose. Instead, the SOS used the money for a statewide voter outreach campaign. When asked about this, SOS officials, said this was appropriate because they had been told by various county election officials that they did not have the capability to provide a countywide voter outreach campaign. We contacted several county elections officials and asked about this only to discover that they had not been contacted and did not ask for, nor want, the SOS’s assistance.

Second, the Administration's Department of General Services (DGS), which, as you know is ultimately responsible for approving state spending, and the State Controller's office have yet to receive a copy of this contract.

Third, according to H.D. Palmer, deputy director for external affairs for the Department of Finance (DOF), DOF has yet to approve this contract and notify the Legislature, which, as you know, is required before an expenditure like this is made.

Finally, we are very concerned about the conflict of interest and potential for political bias and partisanship in a "voter outreach" contract with a firm that employs individuals with a history of working for high ranking Democrat officials and that touts itself as working with "Team Biden." Imagine the outrage that would be expressed if the shoe were on the other foot and a Republican SOS entered into a similar contract with a firm with close ties to President Trump. It certainly wouldn't take long for such a contract to be canceled and investigated.

For these reason, I am asking for your administration to step in, cancel this contract, and investigate whether the contract is legal and appropriate.

Thank you in advance. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,



Shannon Grove
Senate Republican Leader
16th District