#### 23TRCV00164

Assigned for all purposes to: Torrance Courthouse, Judicial Officer: Deirdre Hill

Electronically FILED by Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles on 01/18/2023 04:26 PM David W. Slayton, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court, by P. Perez, Deputy Clerk

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2	Joseph R. Manning, Jr., Esq. (State Bar No. 2233 <b>MANNING LAW, APC</b>	381)
	20062 S.W. Birch St. Suite 200	
3	Newport Beach, CA 92660 (949) 200-8755 Phone	
4	(866) 843-8308 Fax	
5	Attorneys for Plaintiff	
6	CALSAFE RESEARCH CENTER, INC.	
7		
	SUPERIOR COURT OF TH	IE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
8	COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES-C	CENTRAL JUDICIAL DISTRICT
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10		
11	CALSAFE RESEARCH CENTER, INC., a California non-profit corporation	CASE No.: 23TRCV00164
12		COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF
	Plaintiff, v.	
13		Health & Safety Code §25249.5, et seq.
14	ALBERTSONS COMPANIES, INC., a	
15	Delaware stock corporation, and BELL-CARTER FOODS, LLC, a California Limited	
16	Liability Company; and DOES 1 to 10,	
17	Defendants.	
18	INTRODU	CTION
19	INTRODE	<del>letton</del>
20	1. This Complaint is brought by plaintiff (	Calsafe Research Center, Inc. ("Plaintiff") in the
21	public interest of the People of the State of Cali	fornia to enforce their right to be informed of the
22	presence of chemicals listed by the State of Cal	ifornia, pursuant to the Safe Drinking Water and
23	Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986, codified at F	Health and Safety Code section 25249.6 et seq.
24		,
25	("Proposition 65"), including Lead.	
26	2. Plaintiff seeks to remedy Defendants' fai	lure to warn citizens of the State of California, in
27		1
1:1		

violation of Proposition 65, about the presence of Lead ("Listed Chemical") in the Defendant ALBERTSONS COMPANIES, INC's., and BELL-CARTER FOODS, LLC's ("Defendants") Better Living Brands (Vons), Capers, Net Wt. 105ml offered for sale throughout the State of California ("Products").

- 3. Defendants' Products contain the Listed Chemical and consumers of Products in the State of California are exposed to the Listed Chemical through dermal exposure and ingestion of the Products.
- 4. Defendants know and intend that their Products expose consumers in the State of California to the Listed Chemical.
- 5. Attached hereto and incorporated by reference are copies of a letter ("60-Day Notices"), dated November 16, 2022, which Plaintiff sent to Defendants, The Vons Companies, Inc. and California's Attorney General. Identical letters were sent to every District Attorney in the state, to the City Attorneys of every California city with a population greater than 775,000 and to all Defendants. Attached to the 60-Day Notices were Certificates of Merit attesting to the reasonable and meritorious basis for this action, Certificates of Service attesting to service of the letters on each entity described above, and a description of Proposition 65 prepared by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment. Furthermore, factual information sufficient to establish the basis of the Certificates of Merit was enclosed with the 60-Day Notices sent to California's Attorney General.
- 6. After receiving the claims asserted in the 60-Day Notice, the public enforcement agencies identified in Paragraph 5 have failed to commence and diligently prosecute a cause of action against Defendants under Proposition 65.

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### **PARTIES**

- 7. Plaintiff is a non-profit corporation organized under California law dedicated to protecting the public from environmental health hazards and toxic exposures. Plaintiff is based in Newport Beach, CA. Plaintiff is a person within the meaning of Health and Safety Code section 25249.11 and brings this enforcement action in the public interest pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(d). Health and Safety Code section 25249.7 (d) specifies that actions to enforce Proposition 65 may be brought by a person in the public interest, provided certain notice requirements and no other public prosecutor is diligently prosecuting an action for the same violation(s).
- 8. Each Defendant is a "Person" in the course of doing business within the meaning of H&S Code §25249.11(a) "Person" means an individual, trust, firm, joint stock company, corporation, company partnership, limited liability company, and association.
- 9. The Defendant Albertsons Companies, Inc. is a Delaware stock corporation that manufactures, distributes, and/or offers for sale in the State of California, Products that contain the Listed Chemical. Defendant BELL-CARTER FOODS, LLC is a California Limited Liability Company that manufactures, distributes, and/or offers for sale in the State of California, Products that contain the Listed Chemical.
- 10. DOES 1 through 10, which manufacture, distribute, and/or offer for sale in the State of California Products that contain the Listed Chemical, are each person in the course of doing business within the meaning of Health and Safety Code section 25249.11. At this time, the true names and capacities of DOES 1 through 10, inclusive, are unknown to Plaintiff, who, therefore, sues said defendants by their fictitious names pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure section 474. Plaintiff is informed and believes, and on that basis alleges, that each of the fictitiously named defendants is

responsible for the acts and occurrences alleged herein. When ascertained, their true names and capacities shall be reflected in an amended complaint.

### **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

- 11. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to California Constitution Article VI, Section 10, which grants the Superior Court "original jurisdiction in all causes except those given by statute to other trial courts." The statute under which this action is brought does not specify any other court with jurisdiction.
- 12. This Court has jurisdiction over Defendants based on Plaintiff's information and good faith belief that each Defendant is a person, firm, corporation, or association that is a citizen of the State of California, has sufficient minimum contacts in the State of California, and/or otherwise purposefully avails itself of the California market. Defendants' purposeful availment renders the exercise of personal jurisdiction by the Court consistent with traditional notions of fair play and substantial justice.
- 13. Venue in this action is proper in Court because Defendants manufacture, distribute, offer for sale, sell, and/or serve Products that contain the Listed Chemical. Liability for Plaintiff's cause of action, or some parts thereof, has accordingly arisen during the times relevant to this Complaint and Plaintiff accordingly seeks civil penalties and forfeitures imposed by statutes.

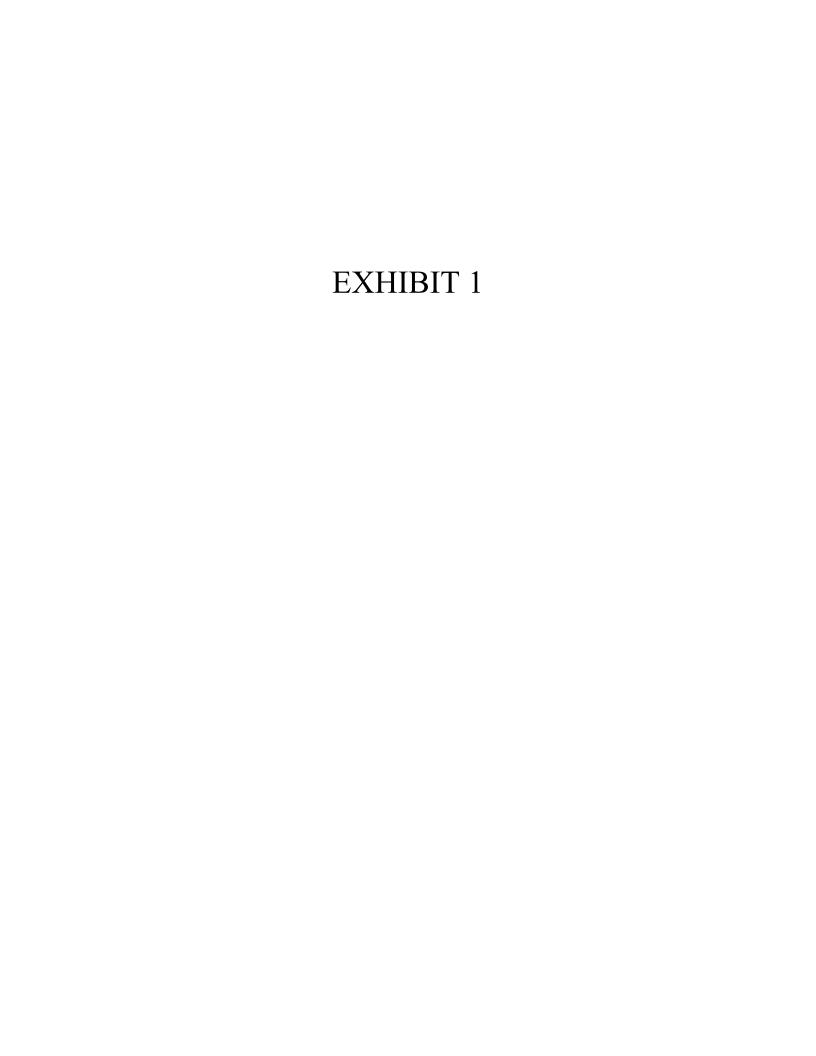
#### FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION

### (Violation of Proposition 65 – Against All Defendants)

- 14. Plaintiff refers to, and incorporates by reference, the allegations of all preceding Paragraphs this Complaint, as though fully set forth herein.
- 15. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(b), as a consequence of the above-described acts, Defendants are liable for a violation of Proposition 65.

### 1 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF** 2 WHEREFORE, PLAINTIFF prays for judgment against Defendants, and each of them, and DOES 1 through 10, as follows: 3 4 1. That the Court, pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(a), preliminarily and permanently enjoin Defendants from manufacturing, distributing, offering for sale, selling and/or 5 serving in the State of California Products that contain the Listed Chemical without first providing 6 a "clear and reasonable warning" under Proposition 65; 7 That the Court grant Plaintiff's reasonable attorneys' fees and costs of suit; 2. 8 3. That the Court, pursuant to Health and Safety Code section 25249.7(b), assess civil penalties 9 against Defendants in such amount as the Court deems appropriate; and, 10 For such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and proper. 4. 11 12 Dated: January 18, 2023 13 MANNING LAW, A.P.C 14 15 16 By: Joseph R. Manning, Jr., Esq. **17** Attorneys for Plaintiff 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 5 27

COMPLAINT FOR CIVIL PENALTIES AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF





Facsimile: 866.843.8308 P65@manninglawoffice.com

## **CONSUMER ATTORNEYS**

November 16, 2022

### NOTICE OF VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY CODE SECTION 25249.5 *ET SEQ*. (PROPOSITION 65)

Re: This notice amends the original notice of violation AG #2022-01014 dated May 20, 2022. This amendment adds Bell-Carter Foods, LLC, as an Alleged Violator.

Dear Alleged Violators and the Appropriate Public Enforcement Agencies:

I represent CalSafe Research Center, Inc. ("CRC"), 4533 MacArthur Blvd., Ste. 165, Newport Beach, CA 92660; Tel. (949) 630-0413. CRC's Executive Director is Eric Fairon. CRC is a California non-profit corporation dedicated to, among other causes, helping safeguard the public from health hazards by bringing about a reduction in the use and misuse of hazardous and toxic chemicals, facilitating a safe environment for consumers and employees, and encouraging corporate responsibility.

CRC has identified violations of California's Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act of 1986 ("Proposition 65"), which is codified at California Health & Safety Code §25249.5 et seq., with respect to the products identified below. These violations have occurred and continue to occur because the alleged Violators identified below failed to provide required clear and reasonable warnings with these products. This letter serves as a notice of these violations to the alleged Violators and the appropriate public enforcement agencies. Pursuant to Health and Safety Code Section 25249.7(d), CRC intends to pursue a private enforcement action in the public interest 60 days after effective service of this notice unless the public enforcement agencies have commenced and are diligently prosecuting an action to rectify these violations.

<u>General Information about Proposition 65</u>. A copy of a summary of Proposition 65, prepared by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, is enclosed with this letter served to the alleged Violators identified below.

<u>Alleged Violators</u>. The names of the person/company covered by this notice that violated Proposition 65 (hereinafter the "Violators") are:

- 1. Albertsons Companies, Inc.
- 2. The Vons Companies, Inc.
- 3. Bell-Carter Foods, LLC



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<u>Consumer Products and Listed Chemical</u>. The products that are the subject of this notice and the chemical in those products identified as exceeding allowable levels are:

Better Living Brands (Vons), Capers, UPC#21130461479 Better Living Brands (Vons), Chocolate Chips, UPC# 21130140763

On February 27, 1987, the State of California officially listed lead as a chemical known to cause developmental toxicity, and male and female reproductive toxicity. On October 1, 1992, the State of California officially listed lead and lead compounds as chemicals known to cause cancer.

It should be noted that CRC may continue to investigate other products that may reveal further violations and result in subsequent notices of violations.

**Route of Exposure.** The consumer exposures that are the subject of this notice result from the recommended use of these products. Consequently, the route of exposure to this chemical has been and continues to be through ingestion.

Approximate Time Period of Violations. Ongoing violations have occurred every day since at least March 14, 2022, as well as every day since the products were introduced into the California marketplace and will continue every day until clear and reasonable warnings are provided to product purchasers and users or until this known toxic chemical is either removed from or reduced to allowable levels in the products. Proposition 65 requires that a clear and reasonable warning be provided prior to exposure to the identified chemical. The method of warning should be a warning that appears on the product label. The Violators violated Proposition 65 because they failed to provide persons ingesting these products with appropriate warnings that they are being exposed to this chemical.

Consistent with the public interest goals of Proposition 65 and a desire to have these ongoing violations of California law quickly rectified, CRC is interested in seeking a constructive resolution of this matter that includes an enforceable written agreement by the Violators to: (1) reformulate the identified products so as to eliminate further exposures to the identified chemical, or provide appropriate warnings on the labels of these products; (2) pay an appropriate civil penalty; and (3) provide clear and reasonable warnings compliant with Proposition 65 to all persons located in California who purchased the above products in the last three years. Such a resolution will prevent further unwarned consumer exposures to the identified chemical, as well as an expensive and time-consuming litigation.



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# **CONSUMER ATTORNEYS**

CRC has retained me as legal counsel in connection with this matter. Please direct all communications regarding this Notice of Violation to my attention at the law office address and telephone number indicated on the letterhead or at P65@ManningLawOffice.com.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Manning, Jr.

P65@ManningLawOffice.com

#### Attachments

Certificate of Merit Certificate of Service

OEHHA Summary (to Alleged Violators only)

Factual Information in Support of Certificate of Merit (to AG only)



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# **CONSUMER ATTORNEYS**

#### CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

Re: Calsafe Research Center, Inc.'s Notice of Proposition 65 Violations by Albertsons Companies, Inc., The Vons Companies, Inc., and Bell-Carter Foods, LLC

### I, Joseph R. Manning, Jr., declare:

- 1. This Certificate of Merit accompanies the attached 60-day notice in which it is alleged that the parties identified in the notice violated California Health & Safety Code Section 25249.6 by failing to provide clear and reasonable warnings.
- 2. I am an attorney for the noticing party.
- 3. I have consulted with one or more persons with relevant and appropriate experience or expertise who have reviewed facts, studies, or other data regarding the exposure to the listed chemical that is the subject of the notice.
- 4. Based on the information obtained through those consultations, and on other information in my possession, I believe there is a reasonable and meritorious case for the private action. I understand that "reasonable and meritorious case for the private action" means that the information provides a credible basis that all elements of the plaintiff's case can be established, and that the information did not prove that the alleged Violators will be able to establish any of the affirmative defenses set forth in the statute.
- 5. Along with the copy of this Certificate of Merit served on the Attorney General is attached additional factual information sufficient to establish the basis for this certificate, including the information identified in California Health & Safety Code §25249.7(h)(2), i.e., (1) the identity of the persons consulted with and relied on by the certifier, and (2) the facts, studies, or other data reviewed by those persons.

Dated: November 16, 2022

Joseph R. Manning, Jr.

P65@ManningLawOffice.com



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# **CONSUMER ATTORNEYS**

### CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE PURSUANT TO 27 CCR § 25903

I, the undersigned, declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the following is true and correct:

I am a citizen of the United States and over the age of 18 years of age. My business address is 20062 S.W. Birch, Newport Beach, CA 92660. I am a resident or employed in the county where the mailing occurred. The envelope or package was placed in the mail at Newport Beach, California.

On November 16, 2022 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time, I served the following documents: NOTICE OF VIOLATION OF CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY CODE §25249.5 ET SEQ.; CERTIFICATE OF MERIT; "THE SAFE DRINKING WATER AND TOXIC ENFORCEMENT ACT OF 1986 (PROPOSITION 65): A SUMMARY" on the following parties by placing a true and correct copy thereof in a sealed envelope, addressed to each of the parties listed below and depositing it at a U.S. Postal Service Office with the postage fully prepaid for delivery by Certified Mail:

Albertsons	Vivek Sankaran	The Vons Companies,	Kevin M. Curry
Companies, Inc.	Albertsons	Inc.	The Vons
C T Corporation	Companies, Inc.	C T Corporation System	Companies, Inc.
System	250 E Parkcenter	330 N Brand Blvd., Ste	1421 Manhattan
330 N Brand Blvd.,	Blvd	700	Ave.,
Ste 700	Boise, ID 83706	Glendale, CA 91203	Fullerton, CA
Glendale, CA 91203			92831
Bell-Carter Foods,	Tim Carter		
LLC	Bell-Carter Foods,		
Paul Adcock	LLC		
590 Ygnacio Valley	590 Ygnacio Valley		
Rd., Ste 300	Rd., Ste 300		
Walnut Creek, CA	Walnut Creek, CA		
94596	94596		

On November 16, 2022 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time, I verified the following documents NOTICE OF VIOLATIONS, CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY CODE §25249.5 ET SEQ.; CERTIFICATE OF MERIT INCLUDING A SUMMARY OF CONFIDENTIAL FACTUAL INFORMATION; ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF MERIT AS REQUIRED BY CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY CODE §25249.7(d)(1) were served on the



20062 SW Birch St, Suite 200 Newport Beach, CA 92660 Office: 949.200.8755 Facsimile: 866.843,8308

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## **CONSUMER ATTORNEYS**

following party when a true and correct copy thereof was uploaded on the California Attorney General's website, which can be accessed at <a href="https://oag.ca.gov/prop65/add-60-day-notice">https://oag.ca.gov/prop65/add-60-day-notice</a>:

Office of the California Attorney General Prop 65 Enforcement Reporting 1515 Clay Street, Suite 2000 Oakland, CA 94612-0550

On November 16, 2022 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time, I verified the following documents **NOTICE OF VIOLATIONS, CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY CODE §25249.5** *ET SEQ.*; **CERTIFICATE OF MERIT** were served on the following parties when a true and correct copy thereof was sent via electronic mail to each of the parties listed below:

Nancy O'Malley, District Attorney	Barbara Yook, District Attorney
Alameda County	Calaveras County
7677 Oakport Street, Suite 650	891 Mountain Ranch Road
Oakland, CA 94621	San Andreas, CA 95249
CEPDProp65@acgov.org	Prop65Env@co.calaveras.ca.us
Stacey Grassini, Deputy District Attorney	Thomas L. Hardy, District Attorney
Contra Costa County	Inyo County
900 Ward Street	168 North Edwards Street
Martinez, CA 94553	Independence, CA 93526
sgrassini@contracostada.org	inyoda@inyocounty.us
Michelle Latimer, Program Coordinator	Dije Ndreu, Deputy District Attorney
Lassen County	Monterey County
220 S. Lassen Street	1200 Aguajito Road
Susanville, CA 96130	Monterey, CA 93940
mlatimer@co.lassen.ca.us	Prop65DA@co.monterey.ca.us
Allison Haley, District Attorney	Michael Hestrin, District Attorney
Napa County	Riverside County
1127 First Street, Suite C	3072 Orange Street
Napa, CA 94559	Riverside, CA 92501
CEPD@countyofnapa.org	Prop65@rivcoda.org
Anne Marie Schubert, District Attorney	Mark Ankcorn, Deputy City Attorney
Sacramento County	San Diego City Attorney
901 G Street	1200 Third Avenue
Sacramento, CA 95814	San Diego, CA 92101



20062 SW Birch St, Suite 200 Newport Beach, CA 92660

Office: 949.200.8755 Facsimile: 866.843.8308 P65@manninglawoffice.com

# **CONSUMER ATTORNEYS**

Prop65@sacda.org	CityAttyProp65@sandiego.gov	
Gregory Alker, Assistant District Attorney	Valerie Lopez, Deputy City Attorney	
San Francisco County	San Francisco City Attorney	
732 Brannan Street	1390 Market Street, 7th Floor	
San Francisco, CA 94103	San Francisco, CA 94102	
gregory.alker@sfgov.org	Valerie.Lopez@sfcityatty.org	
Tori Verber Salazar, District Attorney	Eric J. Dobroth, Deputy District Attorney	
San Joaquin County	San Luis Obispo County	
222 E. Weber Avenue, Room 202	County Government Center Annex, 4th Floor	
Stockton, CA 95202	San Luis Obispo, CA 93408	
DAConsumer.Environmental@sjcda.org	edobroth@co.slo.ca.us	
Christopher Dalbey, Deputy District Attorney	Bud Porter, Supervising Deputy District Attorney	
Santa Barbara County	Santa Clara County	
1112 Santa Barbara Street	70 W Hedding St	
Santa Barbara, CA 93101	San Jose, CA 95110	
DAProp65@co.santa-barbara.ca.us	EPU@da.sccgov.org	
Stephan R. Passalacqua, District Attorney	Phillip J. Cline, District Attorney	
Sonoma County	Tulare County	
600 Administration Dr	221 S Mooney Blvd	
Sonoma, CA 95403	Visalia, CA 95370	
jbarnes@sonoma-county.org	Prop65@co.tulare.ca.us	
Gregory D. Totten, District Attorney	Jeff W. Reisig, District Attorney	
Ventura County	Yolo County	
800 S Victoria Ave	301 Second Street	
Ventura, CA 93009	Woodland, CA 95695	
daspecialops@ventura.org	cfepd@yolocounty.org	

On November 16, 2022 between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Pacific Standard Time, I served the following documents: **NOTICE OF VIOLATION, CALIFORNIA HEALTH & SAFETY CODE §25249.5** *ET SEQ.*; **CERTIFICATE OF MERIT** on each parties on the Service List attached hereto by placing a true and correct copy thereof in a sealed envelope, addressed to each of the parties on the Service List attached hereto, and depositing it at a U.S. Postal Service Office with the postage fully prepaid for delivery by First Class Mail.

Executed on November 16, 2022, in Newport Beach, California.



Facsimile: 866.843.8308 P65@manninglawoffice.com

**CONSUMER ATTORNEYS** 

Krystal Garzon



Facsimile: 866.843.8308 P65@manninglawoffice.com

# **CONSUMER ATTORNEYS**

### **Service List**

District Attorney, Alpine County	District Attorney, Madera County	District Attorney, San Mateo County
P.O. Box 248	209 West Yosemite Avenue	400 County Ctr., 3rd Floor
Markleeville, CA 96120	Madera, CA 93637	Redwood City, CA 94063
District Attorney, Amador County	District Attorney, Marin County	District Attorney, Shasta County
708 Court Street, Suite 202	3501 Civic Center Drive, Room 130	1355 West Street
Jackson, CA 95642	San Rafael, CA 94903	Redding, CA 96001
District Attorney, Butte County	District Attorney, Mariposa County	District Attorney, Sierra County
25 County Center Drive, Suite 245	Post Office Box 730	100 Courthouse Square, 2nd Floor
Oroville, CA 95965	Mariposa, CA 95338	Downieville, CA 95936
District Attorney, Colusa County	District Attorney, Mendocino County	District Attorney, Siskiyou County
310 6 <sup>th</sup> Street	Post Office Box 1000	Post Office Box 986
Colusa, CA 95932	Ukiah, CA 95482	Yreka, CA 96097
District Attorney, Del Norte County	District Attorney, Merced County	District Attorney, Solano County
450 H Street, Room 171	550 W. Main Street	675 Texas Street, Ste 4500
Crescent City, CA 95531	Merced, CA 95340	Fairfield, CA 94533
District Attorney, El Dorado County	District Attorney, Modoc County	District Attorney, Stanislaus County
778 Pacific St	204 S Court Street, Room 202	832 12th Street, Ste 300
Placerville, CA 95667	Alturas, CA 96101-4020	Modesto, CA 95354
District Attorney, Fresno County	District Attorney, Mono County	District Attorney, Sutter County
2100 Tulare St.,	Post Office Box 617	463 2nd Street
Fresno, CA 93721	Bridgeport, CA 93517	Yuba City, CA 95991
District Attorney, Glenn County	District Attorney, Nevada County	District Attorney, Tehama County
Post Office Box 430	201 Commercial Street	Post Office Box 519
Willows, CA 95988	Nevada City, CA 95959	Red Bluff, CA 96080
District Attorney, Humboldt County	District Attorney, Placer County	District Attorney, Trinity County
825 5th Street 4th Floor	10810 Justice Center Drive, Ste 240	Post Office Box 310
Eureka, CA 95501	Roseville, CA 95678	Weaverville, CA 96093
District Attorney, Imperial County	District Attorney, Plumas County	District Attorney, Tuolumne County
940 West Main Street, Ste 102	520 Main Street, Room 404	423 N. Washington Street
El Centro, CA 92243	Quincy, CA 95971	Sonora, CA 95370
District Attorney, Kern County	District Attorney, San Benito County	District Attorney, Yuba County
1215 Truxtun Avenue	419 Fourth Street, 2nd Floor	215 Fifth Street, Suite 152
Bakersfield, CA 93301	Hollister, CA 95023	Marysville, CA 95901
District Attorney, Kings County 1400 West Lacey Boulevard Hanford, CA 93230	Los Angeles City Attorney's Office City Hall East 200 N. Main Street, Suite 800 Los Angeles, CA 90012	San Jose City Attorney's Office 200 East Santa Clara Street, 16th Floor San Jose, CA 95113
District Attorney, Lake County 255 N. Forbes Street Lakeport, CA 95453	District Attorney, San Diego County 330 West Broadway, Suite 1300 San Diego, CA 92101	District Attorney, Los Angeles County Hall of Justice 211 West Temple St., Ste 1200 Los Angeles, CA 90012