

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

**RYAN P. WALTERS, an Individual v. State of California, by and
through the California Highway Patrol, Beau Biter, Enrique Ayala,
John Betz, and Brandon Urrutia**

Walters v. State of California · No. 8:24-cv-00196 MWF-DFM · Decided January 14, 2026

SUMMARY

This document is a proposed Stipulated Protective Order concerning discovery in Ryan P. Walters v. State of California and related defendants in the Central District of California. It governs the designation, disclosure, use, challenge, filing, and final disposition of confidential discovery materials, including peace-officer personnel records, law-enforcement policies, privileged materials, and third-party private information. The order was stipulated through counsel and dated January 13, 2026.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Central District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Douglas F. McCormick
DECIDED	January 14, 2026
DOCKET	8:24-cv-00196 MWF-DFM
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	The parties stipulated to entry of a protective order governing confidential discovery materials in this pending civil-rights action. The magistrate judge approved and entered the stipulated protective order for good cause shown.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Ryan P. Walters v. State of California, by and through the California Highway Patrol, Beau Biter, Enrique Ayala, John Betz, Brandon Urrutia, Does 1 through 10

TOPICS

- discovery dispute
- civil procedure
- civil rights
- section 1983
- police misconduct

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether good cause existed to enter a stipulated protective order under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 26(c) for qualifying confidential discovery materials.
2. What procedures should govern designation, access, use, challenge, disclosure, filing under seal, and final disposition of protected discovery materials.

HOLDINGS

1. The court approved and entered the parties' stipulated protective order upon a showing of good cause, limiting protection to information or items entitled to confidential treatment under applicable legal principles.
2. Designation of discovery material as confidential does not itself authorize filing that material under seal; a party seeking to file protected material under seal must comply with Central District of California Local Rule 79-5 and obtain a court order authorizing sealing of the specific material.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“The parties acknowledge that this Order does not confer blanket protections on all disclosures or responses to discovery and that the protection it affords from public disclosure and use extends only to the limited information or items that are entitled to confidential treatment under the applicable legal principles.” (at 1)

“Protected Material may only be filed under seal pursuant to a court order authorizing the sealing of the specific Protected Material at issue.” (at 13)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Discovery in the action concerns confidential, proprietary, and private information, including peace-officer personnel records, investigative materials, department policies, compelled statements, third-party personal information, and sensitive California Highway Patrol tactics and practices. The defendants asserted privacy, privilege, safety, law-enforcement, and deliberative-process concerns, while the plaintiff did not concede those contentions but agreed that a protective order would facilitate discovery. The order limits use and disclosure of designated material, establishes procedures for designating and challenging confidentiality, addresses inadvertent production and unauthorized disclosure, and governs disposition of protected material after the litigation ends.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Ryan P. Walters brought a federal civil-rights action against the State of California, the California Highway Patrol, and individual defendants. During discovery, the parties agreed that confidential, proprietary, private, and law-enforcement-related information required limited protection from public disclosure and nonlitigation use. The parties submitted the stipulated protective order, which the court entered on January 14, 2026.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Sanchez v. Santa Ana Police Department, 936 F.2d 1027, 1033-1034 (9th Cir. 1990)
- Hallon v. City of Stockton, 2012 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 14665, *2-3, 12-13 (E.D. Cal. 2012)
- Soto v. City of Concord, 162 F.R.D. 603, 613 n. 4, 616 (N.D. Cal. 1995)
- Maricopa Audubon Society v. United States Forest Service, 108 F.3d 1089, 1092-1095 (9th Cir. 1997)
- Kelly v. City of San Jose, 114 F.R.D. 654, 668-671 (N.D. Cal. 1987)
- Tuite v. Henry, 181 F.R.D. 175, 176-177 (D. D.C. 1998)
- Hamstreet v. Duncan, 2007 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 89702 (D. Or. 2007)
- Admiral Insurance Co. v. United States District Court, 881 F.2d 1486, 1492, 1495 (9th Cir. 1989)
- Lybarger v. City of Los Angeles, 40 Cal. 3d 822, 828-830 (1985)

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