

ELECTION OFFICIALS ARE REGISTERING SELF-CONFESSED FOREIGN NATIONALS TO VOTE IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

PILF's Federal Lawsuit Reveals Pattern of Aliens Admitting Ineligibility to Vote

October 2024 – Imagine you are a county voter registrar. You receive a voter application containing the following: a full name you do not commonly see; a foreign birthplace; and a checkbox indicating that the applicant is *not* a U.S. citizen. Do you approve that application without question? In dozens of records disclosed to PILF in a federal lawsuit this year, it appears Alameda County, California, officials accepted *self-confessed* foreign nationals' applications for voting.

In February 2024, PILF sued Alameda County for failing to disclose records relating to foreign nationals getting registered to vote and removed from the voter roll. The case was settled months later after the documents were released. The County supplied records relating to more than **60 voter registration files**. This sampling from this county revealed two significant patterns: aliens admitted they were not U.S. citizens on the registration forms; and they often remain on the rolls for years until they try to naturalize and must ask election officials to remove them from the voter roll. California counties are not performing citizenship verification and must rely on foreign nationals to remain honest about their ineligibility — often more than once.

Alameda County Core Figures

As part of the lawsuit settlement agreement, Alameda County disclosed to PILF a dataset in 2024, illustrating trends in foreign nationals registering to vote.

- Total Disclosed Cancellations for Non-Citizenship: 54
- Years with Most Registrations Cancelled: 2023 (18)
- Earliest Known Year of Registration: 2004
- Longest Known Period of Registration: 14 years
- Average Time on Voter Roll: 4 years

The County also included 12 voter registration files where foreign nationals still admitted their ineligibility due to citizenship, but their applications were rejected. Why some admissions of

PILF **sued Alameda County**, CA, to force the release of voter registration records related to alien residents.

Quick Takes

Records show foreign nationals were honest about their ineligibility during voter registration and were still accepted to vote.

Despite their ineligibility, aliens remained on the roll for roughly **four years**.

Some documents show attempts to **vote** in person and evidence of **mail ballots** returned by alien registrants. These were likely rejected for counting.

¹ https://publicinterestlegal.org/cases/pilf-v-dupuis/

ineligibility were noticed and others were not is unclear. Several disclosed files included documents showing attempts by these foreign nationals to vote with references to mail and provisional ballots.

Notable Alameda County Case Studies

Documents disclosed by Alameda County during the lawsuit typically show how foreign nationals are honest or silent about their ineligibility during registration. Had they simply said they were U.S. citizens, no further verification would have occurred under California law. Below are case studies.

Name: Gang

Years Registered: 3

Records disclosed to PILF show initial registration occurring in May 2020 with a cancellation in June 2023. The bilingual voter application clearly indicates foreign citizenship and place of birth in China.



Name: Victoria

Years Registered: Unclear – Incomplete Records

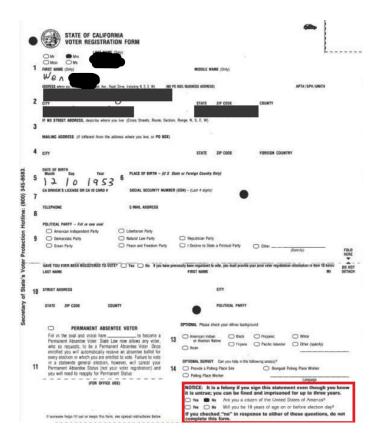
Disclosed records do not definitively show prior attempts at registration. This case shows how a provisional ballot gave the alien resident the opportunity to be honest with their ineligibility. About eight months after this ballot was submitted, Victoria was recorded as cancelled from the voter roll.



Name: Wen

Years Registered: 10

This registrant record begins in December 2005 and lasts to December 2015, clearly indicating foreign citizenship at the outset. Indicia on the document suggest it was completed at a DMV office. Disclosed records state the alien ultimately "called and stated not to be a citizen at the time of application" to help cancel the file.



Name: Shahid

Years Registered: At least 2 years

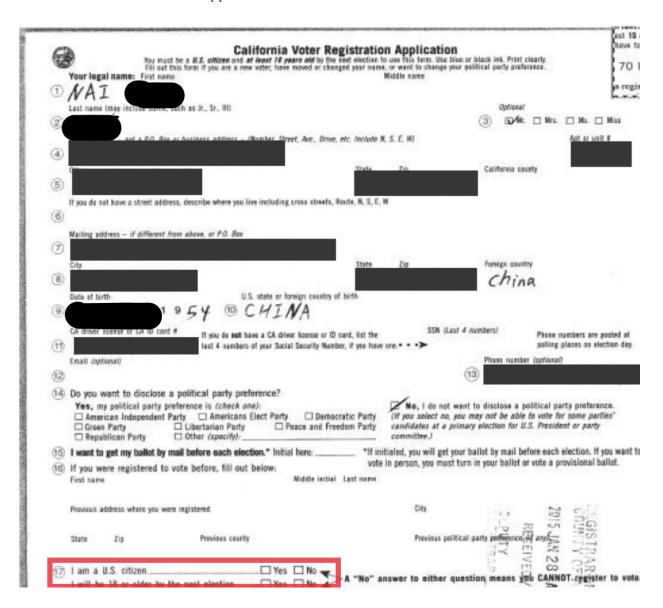
Registrant revealed their ineligibility at the polling place during the 2016 Presidential Election by seeking a provisional ballot after their original mail ballot was lost. Later, the registrant "came to office with documentation" confirming their foreign nationality and was cancelled in June 2018.



Name: Mai

Years Registered: 1.5 years

This registrant's file is representative of many cancellation records provided to PILF by Alameda County. Here, the citizenship attestation boxes are left blank amid an admission of foreign birth in China. In 2016, the former registrant reportedly called the officials to inform them of their "green card status" at the time of the application.



Common Causes of Foreign Registrants, Nationally

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA or 'Motor Voter') provides the most common pathway for foreign nationals to get registered to vote. The 24 states plus D.C.² that have automatic Motor Voter Registration, meaning they are not giving the immigrant a chance to decline registration, exacerbate the problem. States giving driver's licenses to *illegal* immigrants increase

² https://www.ncsl.org/elections-and-campaigns/automatic-voter-registration

traffic to DMVs. States with higher amounts of *legal* immigration mean even more driver's licenses or state IDs are needed for daily life (and increases the risk of screening immigrants for voter registration). **Border states** see a greater number of legal immigrants and individuals moving back and forth – especially those having twin cities on their border (like Nogales, AZ/Nogales, Sonora). Finally, battleground states with a high number of **third-party voter registration drives** can expose immigrants to improperly getting registered to vote. Every scenario where a foreign national encounters Motor Voter protocols creates risks for premature voter registration. Unfortunately, if an *illegal* immigrant becomes registered and has lived a life to avoid contact with the federal government at every opportunity, there are few data-driven tools to identify and remove them from a voter roll.

Prior PILF Research, Litigation on Aliens Voting

This research brief would not have been possible without federal litigation under the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. For nearly a decade, PILF has uncovered government records of alien voter cancellations. These studies were carried out in places like Arizona, California, Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Michigan, Nevada, Texas, and sanctuary cities across the nation. Those reports are made available on the PILF website.³ Sometimes research cannot occur without litigation. PILF has brought and won federal trial and appellate court cases in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Maine, and Texas to secure access.⁴ PILF is litigating against Alameda County, California, for similar records.⁵ This campaign has made it easier to study alien election participation than ever before in the Motor Voter era.

PILF President, J. Christian Adams

"States should enact safeguards against noncitizens registering and voting. Americans deserve better than the honor system in voter registration. These records show incompetence by election officials. When someone admits they are not a U.S. citizen, they should never be registered to vote. California has the resources and data to better verify citizenship in voter registration if only Governor Newsom had a willingness to act."

Support More of This Research

PILF is the pioneer in research techniques and litigation to uncover real foreign voting in American elections. The Foundation is committed to building a record of facts which policymakers can trust to address this problem for their communities. If you wish to support this work, please follow the QR code below to give a tax-deductible donation.



³ PILF Reports archive, https://publicinterestlegal.org/foreign-nationals-voting/

⁴ PILF litigation archive, https://publicinterestlegal.org/cases/

⁵ https://publicinterestlegal.org/cases/pilf-v-dupuis/