



VIA EMAIL

March 16, 2026

California Joint Legislative Audit Committee
Legislative Office Building
1020 N Street, #107
Sacramento, CA 95814

Members: Hon. John Harabedian (Chair), Hon. Christopher Cabaldon (Vice-Chair), Hon. Carl DeMaio, Hon. Mike Fong, Hon. Gregg Hart, Hon. Josh Hoover, Hon. Sharon Quirk-Silva, Hon. Rhodesia Ranson, Hon. Angelique Ashby, Hon. Josh Becker, Hon. Sabrina Cervantes, Hon. Dave Cortese, Hon. Megan Dahle, Hon. Suzette Martinez Valladares

cc: Wesley Op – Chief Consultant

Audit Request - 2026-134 California Fusion Centers – State and Local Oversight - {SUPPORT}

Oakland Privacy writes in support of Audit Request 2026-134 on State and Local Oversight of California Fusion Centers.

Oakland Privacy is a citizen's coalition that works regionally to defend the right to privacy, enhance public transparency, and increase oversight of law enforcement, particularly regarding the use of surveillance techniques and equipment. We were instrumental in the creation of the first standing municipal citizens' privacy advisory commission in the City of Oakland, and we have engaged in privacy enhancing legislative efforts with several Northern California cities and regional entities. As experts on municipal privacy reform, we have written use policies and impact reports for a variety of surveillance technologies, conducted research and investigations, and developed frameworks for the implementation of equipment with respect for civil rights, privacy protections and community control. Occasionally we provide input on issues that impact civil rights and liberties.

We write today to encourage the committee to green light audit request 2026-134, a timely review of the activities of the five federal fusion centers located in California (Northern California Regional Intelligence Center (NCRIC), Central California Regional Intelligence Center (CCIC), Joint Regional Intelligence Center (LA-JRIC), Orange County Intelligence Center (OCIC) and Law Enforcement Coordination Center (SD-LECC)).

Federal fusion centers are state agencies utilizing tax dollars, both from the state coffers directly and via various funding streams from the federal government and are largely staffed by federal personnel. Their general charge is counter terrorism, but they have reportedly engaged in a wide range of activities under that banner.

Both the funding flows and the specific activities engaged in by the federal fusion centers are somewhat obscure and the audit request seeks to shed more light on both to inform policy makers.

As an organization active in tracking government surveillance and attempting to craft appropriate safeguards to protect civil rights and personal privacy, Oakland Privacy has been interested in fusion center operations for many years. Back in 2016, the author of this letter wrote an article for *Peace Review* and *Utne Reader* reviewing some of the first Congressional oversight reports on the federal fusion center program.¹ We have attended Bay Area UASI ((Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative) meetings for years to try to get a clearer picture of the interplay between state and federal funding streams. We have had a cordial relationship with Mike Sena, who operates the Northern California center, but were disappointed to see NCRIC collude with the San Francisco Police Department to evade San Francisco's ban on the use of facial recognition by city employees.² State-operated entities should respect the laws of the local jurisdictions in which they provide services, and if that is repeatedly not the case, the state should know about it.

In 2024, Oakland Privacy filed public record requests with all five California fusion centers. We asked for a log detailing the events or occasions where they provided situational intelligence, personnel or equipment to local law enforcement and whether local law enforcement made the request or the fusion center initiated it. We received a range of responses from four of the fusion centers. The Los Angeles JRIC refused our request. Initially they stated they were exempt from the California Public Records Act. When we had an attorney correct that erroneous interpretation, JRIC then responded that the records would not be released under the national security exemption. In contrast, we received a very informative log from the Orange County center detailing the 379 times between June 30, 2023 and June 30, 2024 that they had provided assistance related to an event, or more than once a day. The events ranged from reproductive rights rallies to the Republican Women;s Night Out At the Movies event, Pride parades, candidate forums held at mosques, charity poker nights, Black History Month programming, voter registration events, the swap meet and a guitar show.³ We believe a systematic look at how state and federal counter terrorism monies are being used would benefit the state and benefit public safety.

Moreover, these are not normal times. California has experienced a disruptive and dangerous incursion in Los Angeles by federal authorities and less incidents all across the state. Legislators have expressed concerns about many aspects of federal operations in the past year, including the masking of federal law enforcement agents, the use of rental cars, the acquisition or attempted acquisition of Medi-Cal, Cal-Fresh, IRS records, social security records, and voter registration data for unclear purposes, and the detention of legal residents, asylum seekers and citizens. Recent executive orders have contained instructions to redefine First Amendment protected activities as domestic terrorism^{4 5 6}.

Given this state of affairs, it seems clear to us that California needs a fuller understanding about how the federal fusion center network will be implementing these instructions in the state, what activities will be prioritized, whether state funds will be used to support crackdowns on First Amendment activity, how data and personal information is flowing through fusion center assistance to local enforcement agencies and back to federal authorities including the FBI, Joint Terrorism Task Force and the Department of Homeland Security, and what definitions of domestic terrorism will be utilized to target center activities.

Many legislative proposals this year target Immigration and Customs Enforcement including proposals to ban ICE agents from eligibility for CA peace officer jobs, prevent moonlighting for DHS by current CA officers, prevent the rental of cars in CA, deny tax breaks to ICE contractors and so on, but the activities of the five federal outposts filled with federal law enforcement officers, equipment and databases within the state remain woefully unclear.

¹<https://www.utne.com/politics/fusing-california-zm0z16wzsel/>

²<https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2024/05/18/facial-recognition-law-enforcement-austin-san-francisco/>

³<https://www.mediafire.com/file/8ies2za0rgtzit5/Situational+Awareness+Log+-+Orange+County.xlsx/file>

⁴<https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/>

⁵<https://www.whitehouse.gov/fact-sheets/2025/09/fact-sheet-president-donald-j-trump-develops-new-strategy-to-counter-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/>

⁶<https://www.aclu.org/news/national-security/how-nspm-7-seeks-to-use-domestic-terrorism-to-target-nonprofits-and-activists>

A state audit prepares legislators with the information needed for informed policy and regulation. The excellent state auditing team prepares findings of fact and in this case, an audit will help California be more prepared and more proactive if steps need to be taken to protect Californians from additional unwanted federal interventions. An audit will additionally provide much needed additional clarity on the utilization of the taxpayer funds that support the activities of these centers.

California would be the first state to initiate a state-level audit of its federal fusion centers, but the concerns behind this audit request are long-standing, both among civil rights groups and even in the security community itself which has long had concerns about the focus and target of federal fusion center activities⁷. These concerns have only become more acute with the current Federal administration that is in place.

In support of this request, we offer the following materials and studies for the committee's review:

[Ending Fusion Center Abuses](#) (Brennan Center)

[Deportation Data Centers](#) (Surveillance Technology Oversight Project)

[Shining a Light on New Jerseys Secret State Intelligence System](#) (Rutgers University)

[Pacifying The Homeland: Intelligence Fusion and Mass Supervision](#) (Brendan Macquade)

[BlueLeaks Hack Suggests Bad Intel Spurred SYPD Violent Response](#) (SJ Inside)

We ask the committee to support Audit Request 2026-134 and empower California's legislators to effectively regulate the operations of California's five federal fusion centers as needed to protect the safety and security of Californians.

Respectfully,

Tracy Rosenberg

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⁷<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/fusion-centers-whats-working-and-what-isnt/>