UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA
CIVIL MINUTES—GENERAL

Case No.	**EDCV 22-4014 JGB (ACCVx)**	Date	April 7, 2026
Title	***Hugo Gonzalez, et al. v. The Geo Group, Inc., et al.***		

Present: The Honorable	JESUS G. BERNAL, UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

MAYNOR GALVEZ	Not Reported
Deputy Clerk	Court Reporter
Attorney(s) Present for Plaintiff(s):	Attorney(s) Present for Defendant(s):
None Present	None Present

Proceedings: **Order (1) GRANTING Proposed-Intervenor's Motion to Intervene (Dkt. No. 121); (2) GRANTING-IN-PART and DENYING-IN-PART Defendant's Application to Seal (Dkt. No. 126); (3) VACATING the April 20, 2026 Hearing on the Motion to Intervene; (4) SETTING Proposed-Intervenor's Motion to Unseal for a Hearing on May 18, 2026 (Dkt. No. 122); and (5) DENYING AS MOOT the Joint Stipulation to Continue the Motions Hearing Date (Dkt. No. 142) (IN CHAMBERS)**

Before the Court is proposed-intervenors Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice, First Amendment Coalition, Los Angeles Public Press, and the Southlander's motion to intervene for the limited purpose of unsealing court records ("Motion to Intervene," Dkt. No. 121) and defendant Geo Group, Inc.'s application to file under seal ("Application," Dkt. No. 126.) The Court determines these matters are appropriate for resolution without a hearing. See Fed. R. Civ. P. 78; L.R. 7-15. After considering the papers filed in support of and in opposition to the Motion to Intervene and the Application, the Court **GRANTS** the Motion to Intervene and **GRANTS-IN-PART** and **DENIES-IN-PART** the Application. The Court **VACATES** the April 20, 2026 hearing on the Motion to Intervene.

I. BACKGROUND

On June 10, 2022, plaintiffs Hugo Gonzalez Mejia ("Gonzalez"), Jose Baca Hernandez ("Baca"), Erick Jaimes Lopez ("Lopez"), Mario Manjarrez ("Manjarrez"), and Ricardo Sandoval Guardarrama's ("Sandoval") (collectively, "Plaintiffs") filed a class action complaint against defendant GEO Group, Inc. ("Defendant" or "GEO") and Does 1-10. ("Complaint," Dkt. No. 1.) The Complaint alleges the following six causes of action: (1) battery, (2) assault, (3)

negligent hiring, training, and supervision, (4) intentional infliction of emotional distress ("IIED"), (5) negligence and failure to provide medical care, and (6) interference of civil rights in violation of the Bane Act, Cal. Civ. Code § 52.1. (Complaint.) On September 28, 2022, GEO answered the Complaint. ("Answer," Dkt. No. 14.) On July 31, 2025, the Court granted-in-part Plaintiffs' motion for class certification and denied Defendant's motion for summary judgment. ("MSJ Order," Dkt. No. 113.)

On February 2, 2026, proposed intervenors Inland Coalition for Immigrant Justice, First Amendment Coalition, Los Angeles Public Press, and the Southlander (collectively, "Proposed Intervenors") filed the Motion to Intervene as well as a motion to unseal. (Motion to Intervene; "Motion to Unseal," Dkt. No. 122.) On February 16, 2026, Defendant filed oppositions to the Motion to Intervene and a motion to unseal court records. ("Opposition to Intervene," Dkt. No. 124; "Opposition to Unseal," Dkt. No. 125.) In support of the Opposition to Unseal, Defendant filed a redacted declaration of James Janecka on February 16, 2026. ("Janecka Decl.," Dkt. No. 125-1.) Additionally, Defendant filed an application to file the Janecka Declaration under seal on February 16, 2026. ("Application," Dkt. No. 126.) In conjunction with the Application, Defendant filed a notice of lodging ("Notice," Dkt. No. 127) and the sealed declaration Janecka Declaration ("Sealed Janecka Decl.," Dkt. No. 128.) On March 9, 2026, Proposed Intervenors filed replies to the oppositions to the Motion to Intervene and Motion to Unseal. ("Intervene Reply," Dkt. No. 132; "Unseal Reply," Dkt. No. 133.) On April 3, 2026, Proposed Intervenors filed a joint stipulation to continue the motions hearing date. ("Stipulation," Dkt. No. 142.)

II. LEGAL STANDARD

A. Motion to Intervene

Under Rule 24(b)[1], the Court may, on timely motion, permit anyone to intervene who "is given a conditional right to intervene by a federal statute," or "has a claim or defense that shares with the main action a common question of law or fact." Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(b)(1)(A)-(B). The Ninth Circuit has stated that permissive intervention "requires (1) an independent ground for jurisdiction; (2) a timely motion; and (3) a common question of law and fact between the movant's claim or defense and the main action." Freedom from Religion Found., Inc. v. Geithner, 644 F.3d 836, 843 (9th Cir. 2011). Although the burden is on the prospective intervenor to demonstrate that the conditions for intervention are satisfied, see Petrol Stops Nw. v. Continental Oil, Co., 647 F.2d 1005, 1010 n.5 (9th Cir. 1981), even if these "threshold requirements" are satisfied, the court retains discretion to deny permissive intervention. Donnelly v. Glickman, 159 F.3d 405, 412 (9th Cir. 1998); see also Orange v. Air Cal., 799 F.2d 535, 539 (9th Cir. 1986) ("Permissive intervention is committed to the broad discretion of the district court.")

[1] All subsequent references to "Rule" refer to the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, unless otherwise noted.

In addition to the threshold requirements, courts also consider a number of additional factors in deciding whether to permit intervention, such as:

> the nature and extent of the intervenors' interest, their standing to raise relevant legal issues, the legal position they seek to advance, and its probable relation to the merits of the case[,] whether changes have occurred in the litigation so that intervention that was once denied should be reexamined, whether the intervenors' interests are adequately represented by other parties, whether intervention will prolong or unduly delay the litigation, and whether parties seeking intervention will significantly contribute to full development of the underlying factual issues in the suit and to the just and equitable adjudication of the legal questions presented.

Perry v. Schwarzenegger, 630 F.3d 898, 905 (9th Cir. 2011) (quoting Spangler v. Pasadena Bd. of Educ., 552 F.2d 1326, 1329 (9th Cir. 1977)).

B. Application to Seal

Courts in the United States "recognize a general right to inspect and copy public records and documents, including judicial records and documents." Nixon v. Warner Commc'ns, Inc., 435 U.S. 589, 597 (1978). The Ninth Circuit instructs that, unless a document is "one 'traditionally kept secret,' a 'strong presumption in favor of access' is the starting point," which "applies fully" to motions for summary judgement and other dispositive pleadings. Kamakana v. City & Cnty. of Honolulu, 447 F.3d 1172, 1178-79 (9th Cir. 2006) (citing Foltz v. State Farm Mutual Auto. Insurance Company, 331 F.3d 1122, 1135 (9th Cir. 2003)). As a result of this "strong presumption," a party seeking to seal a judicial record must meet the "compelling reasons" standard by articulating "compelling reasons supported by specific factual findings." Id. at 1178. The Court, in turn, must "conscientiously balance" the public's interest in understanding the judicial process and the party's interest in keeping the records secret. Id. at 1179. A compelling reason to justify sealing records exists when the documents might be used for "improper purposes," including to "gratify private spite, promote public scandal, circulate libelous statements, or release trade secrets." Id. (citing Nixon, 435 U.S. at 598.) "[E]mbarrassment, incrimination, or exposure to further litigation," without more, will not suffice to justify sealing records. Id. (citing Foltz, 331 F.3d at 1136.) After considering these interests, the Court must "articulate the factual basis for its ruling, without relying on hypothesis or conjecture." Id. (citing Hagestad v. Tragesser, 49 F.3d 1430, 1434 (9th Cir. 1995)).

However, records attached to "non-dispositive motions," such as discovery motions, may be sealed for "good cause" under Rule 26(c). Id. at 1180. The "good cause" standard provides "flexibility in balancing and protecting the interests of private parties." Id.

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III. DISCUSSION

Proposed Intervenors move to intervene to pursue their Motion to Unseal. (Motion to Intervene.) In support of their Opposition to the Motion to Intervene, Defendant applies to file the Janecka Declaration and attached exhibits under seal. (App.) The Court takes each request in turn.

A. Motion to Intervene

Proposed Intervenors seek this Court's permission to intervene in order to pursue their Motion to Unseal. (Mot. to Intervene at 8.) "Nonparties seeking access to a judicial record in a civil case may do so by seeking permissive intervention under Rule 24(b)(2)." San Jose Mercury News, Inc. v. U.S. Dist. Ct.--N. Dist. (San Jose), 187 F.3d 1096, 1100 (9th Cir. 1999). Permissive intervention "requires (1) an independent ground for jurisdiction; (2) a timely motion; and (3) a common question of law and fact between the movant's claim or defense and the main action." Freedom from Religion Found., Inc. v. Geithner, 644 F.3d 836, 843 (9th Cir. 2011). Defendants make no argument under the first and third factor and only argue that Proposed-Intervenor's Motion to Intervene is untimely. (Mot. to Intervene at 2.) In any case, where, as here, the proposed intervenors merely seek access to judicial records, "an independent jurisdictional basis is not required" nor is there any reason "to require . . . a strong nexus of fact or law." Beckman Indus., Inc. v. Int'l Ins. Co., 966 F.2d 470, 473-74 (9th Cir. 1992); see also Cosgrove v. Nat'l Fire & Marine Ins. Co., 770 F. App'x 793, 795 (9th Cir. 2019) ("A third party seeking permissive intervention purely to unseal a court record does not need to demonstrate independent jurisdiction or a common question of law or fact.") Thus, the Court determines whether the motion was timely filed.

The Court must consider the following three factors to determine the timeliness of a motion to intervene: "(1) the stage of the proceeding at which an applicant seeks to intervene; (2) the prejudice to other parties; and (3) the reason for and length of the delay." League of United Latin Am. Citizens v. Wilson, 131 F.3d 1297, 1302 (9th Cir. 1997) (quoting County of Orange v. Air California, 799 F.2d 535, 537 (9th Cir. 1986)). "Timeliness is a flexible concept" entrusted to the "considerable discretion" of this Court. Dilks v. Aloha Airlines, 642 F.2d 1155, 1156 (9th Cir. 1981).

The Court finds that the Motion to Intervene is timely. As to the first and third factors, "delays measured in years have been tolerated where an intervenor is pressing the public's right of access to judicial records." San Jose Mercury News, Inc. v. U.S. Dist. Ct.--N. Dist. (San Jose), 187 F.3d 1096, 1101 (9th Cir. 1999). Under that standard, the Motion to Intervene is timely even by Defendant's count where it was filed "over a year after the parties initially filed the Sealing Applications at issue." (Opp. at 3.) Defendant attempts to distinguish Beckman, to which San Jose Mercury News cites in support, because it involved a challenge to a protective order rather than an order granting an application to seal. (Opp. at 4-5.) The Court is not convinced, however, that the distinction makes a meaningful difference. In both instances, albeit through slightly different procedural means, the intervening party is "pressing the public's

right of access to judicial records." San Jose Mercury News, Inc., 187 F.3d at 1101. Although Proposed Intervenors filed the Motion to Intervene after the motions for summary judgement and for class certification were adjudicated, "the resolution of a dispute on the merits, whether by trial or summary judgment, is at the heart of the interest in ensuring the public's understanding of the judicial process and of significant public events." Kamakana, 447 F.3d 1179. Accordingly, the Court finds that the first and third factors weigh in favor of Proposed Intervenors.

As to the prejudice to Defendant, the Court finds that this factor weighs in favor of the Proposed Intervenors. Defendant mainly argues that it would be prejudiced because this Court already adjudicated the applications to seal and, had it known the documents could be made public, it would have chosen not to file the documents in the case. (Opp. at 3-4.) However, the Ninth Circuit already rejected similar arguments in San Jose Mercury News. The Ninth Circuit held that it was "only upon entry of the stipulated protective order that the injury to the *public's* right of access became clear." San Jose Mercury News, Inc., 187 F.3d at 1101. Likewise, here, the Court finds that any injury to the public's right of access to the records in this case did not become clear until the Court granted the applications to seal at issue. Furthermore, as to Defendant's reliance argument, ultimately "[t]he right of access to court documents belongs to the public." Id. The Ninth Circuit also warned that finding a motion to intervene untimely would wholly "stymy[] the public's right of access" because any subsequent motions to intervene would also likely be untimely. Id. Finally, the Ninth Circuit joined other courts in recognizing that, "assuming an intervenor does assert a legitimate, presumptive right to open the court record of a particular dispute, the potential burden or inequity to the parties should affect not the right to intervene." Id. (citing Pub. Citizen v. Liggett Grp., Inc., 858 F.2d 775, 787 (1st Cir. 1988)). Accordingly, the Court finds the Motion to Intervene timely and **GRANTS** the Motion to Intervene.

B. Application to Seal

Defendant requests that the Court seal the Janecka Declaration and the attached exhibits. (App. at 3.) Plaintiffs do not oppose the Application. (Id.) Although Proposed Intervenors filed no opposition to the Application, they were largely unable to review the Janecka Declaration because Defendant seeks to file nearly the entire Janecka Declaration and the entirety of the attached exhibits under seal. (Reply at 4.) Defendant argues that the "good cause" standard, instead of the more stringent "compelling reasons" standard, applies to the Application because the Motion to Unseal is non-dispositive. (Id. at 4-5.) Defendant largely argues that the Declaration and exhibits attached contain sensitive information, such as names of detainees and detention officers, operating procedures, and security measures. (See App.)

Given that the records in Exhibit B sought to be sealed are duplicative of records already sealed by the Court,[2] the Court finds that continued sealing of the exhibits already sealed is warranted pending the Court's adjudication of the Motion to Unseal. However, the Janecka Declaration and the attached Exhibit A discuss only in broad terms the sealed records and why they should remain sealed. As a result, the Court finds that no good cause exists to keep these records sealed. Accordingly, the Court **GRANTS-IN-PART** and **DENIES-IN-PART** the Application. The Court **ORDERS** Defendant to file the Janecka Declaration and the attached Exhibit A on the docket unsealed.

IV. DISCUSSION

For the reasons discussed above, the Court **GRANTS** the Motion to Intervene. Additionally, the Court **GRANTS-IN-PART** and **DENIES-IN-PART** the Application. The Court further **ORDERS** Defendant to file the Janecka Declaration and the attached Exhibit A on the docket unsealed. The Court **VACATES** the April 20, 2026 hearing on the Motion to Intervene. Having granted the Motion to Intervene, the Court **CONTINUES** the hearing on the Motion to Unseal to **May 18, 2026** at **9:00 a.m.** and **DENIES** the Stipulation **AS MOOT**.

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[2] The Court has determined that it has not yet adjudicated the application to file under seal filed on November 30, 2024. ("November 30, 2024 Application, Dkt. No. 60.) Proposed Intervenors argue that the Court failed to provide any reasoning supporting granting the November 30, 2024 Application in the order issued October 1, 2024. (Mot. to Unseal at 20-21 (citing "October 1, 2024 Order," Dkt. No. 61).) Although the caption of the October 1, 2024 Order states "Order Granting Application for Leave to File Under Seal Documents In Support of Defendant The Geo Group Inc.'s Motion For Summary Judgement," the text of the order merely extends Defendant's deadline for filing its motion for summary judgement by one day. (See October 1, 2024 Order.) Furthermore, the Court granted the extension by using the proposed order attached to the joint stipulation requesting the extension filed by Defendant, which is distinct from the proposed order attached to Defendant's November 30, 2024 Application. (Compare Dkt. No. 59-2 with Dkt. No. 60-1.) Notwithstanding the language of the caption in the October 1, 2024 Order, the Court issued no ruling as to Defendant's November 30, 2024 Application, which is confirmed by the filing of the Opposition to Defendant's November 30, 2024 Application and the Reply to Defendant's November 30, 2024 Application subsequent to the issuance of the October 1, 2024 Order. (Dkt. Nos. 70, 83.) The Court also issued no ruling as to Defendant's November 30, 2024 Application when adjudicating Defendant's motion for summary judgment. (See MSJ Order.) As a result, the Court has not yet ruled on whether the documents attached to Defendant's November 30, 2024 Application may be filed under seal. Defendant, however, simultaneously filed multiple exhibits on the public docket with the November 30, 2024 Application. (Dkt. No. 60-4.) The only documents provisionally filed under seal were those which were manually filed on October 3, 2024. (Dkt. No. 64.) Because those documents are provisionally filed under seal, the Court will maintain those records under seal here until it can adjudicate the November 30, 2024 Application together with the Motion to Unseal.

IT IS SO ORDERED.