

A real CIPA demand letter

Received June 2026 · California Penal Code § 638.51 — “pen register” · Sent by a serial *pro se* filer

What follows is an actual demand letter received by a business we work with, together with the draft Complaint attached to it — the document as it arrived, not a reconstruction. It is published here because these letters are templates: the theory, the structure and often the sentences are identical from target to target. Only the company name, the domain and the captured tracking identifiers change.

The short version. Strip away the boilerplate about how browsers work and the entire case is one paragraph — paragraph 20. On page load, before the visitor clicked, accepted, dismissed or scrolled past anything, the site sent a request to Google Analytics. No hack, no breach. Standard analytics, running before consent. The remedy demanded is a block-first consent model, which is the fix we would recommend anyway.

WHAT TO READ FOR

- **Paragraph 20** — the evidence. Note that the sender pleads he is a California consumer who accessed and interacted with the website, then pastes in browser details reporting **HeadlessChrome/148.0.7778.96** at a 980×700 viewport. That is an automated scanner, not a person. He documented his own bot in his own complaint.
- **The prayer for relief** — disable third-party trackers until consent, re-architect so nothing fires on page load before interaction, implement true opt-in. Read as a to-do list, it is sound advice.
- **The cover letter** — note that the Complaint is described as “prepared and ready to be filed.” The pressure is the point.

WHAT WAS REMOVED, AND HOW

- The company's name, its website domain, and its page title and tagline, wherever they appeared.
- The Google Analytics identifiers the sender captured — measurement ID, client ID and session ID — and the encoded page URL and title parameters.
- The sender's postal address, telephone number, email address and handwritten signature. His name is left intact: he files *pro se* and his identity is a matter of public legal record.
- **Two pages were removed entirely rather than redacted.** The mailing envelope carried a named individual and a street address and taught the reader nothing. The letter's own Exhibit A — a screen

capture of the company's home page with the browser's network panel open — showed the company's logo, its name, the domain in the address bar and dozens of request URLs, at a scan quality too poor to redact reliably. Rather than risk missing one, it is omitted.

The redactions are destructive. Each page was rasterised, the identifying regions were painted out of the image, and the document was rebuilt from those rasters. There is no text layer beneath the black boxes and no overlay to remove — the underlying content is gone from this file. The result was then re-read by optical character recognition to confirm that none of the removed strings survives anywhere in it.

Published by Law-O-Matic as an educational exhibit. This is not legal advice, and Technology On Call is not a law firm. If you have received a letter like this one, talk to a qualified attorney.



JUNE 14, 2026

Via First-Class Mail

Re: Informal Dispute Resolution

To Whomsoever This May Concern:

This is regarding your violation of California's Invasion of Privacy Act ("CIPA") Cal. Penal Code § 638.51(a). You have installed and used multiple pen registers on your website without consent. Seeking injunctive relief, declaratory relief and statutory damages. The attached Complaint is prepared and ready to be filed with the Los Angeles Superior Court should this matter remain unresolved.

Regards,



VIVEK SHAH

[REDACTED]

**SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

VIVEK SHAH,
Plaintiff,

v.

[REDACTED]
Defendant.

Case No. _____

**COMPLAINT FOR VIOLATION OF
THE CALIFORNIA INVASION OF
PRIVACY ACT ("CIPA") (Cal. Penal
Code §§ 638.50(b), 638.51(a), 637.2)**

DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL

INTRODUCTION

1. This action is about unlawful internet surveillance. Defendant operates and profits from a public-facing website at [REDACTED] (the "Website"). When California visitors open the Website, Defendant causes third-party tracking code to execute in the visitor's browser and transmit addressing/signaling information—including the visitor's internet protocol ("IP") address and related device/browser identifiers—to third parties for marketing, analytics, attribution, and profiling.

2. Under California law, a "pen register" includes any "device or process" that records or decodes "dialing, routing, addressing, or signaling information" transmitted with an electronic communication, but not the contents of that communication. (Cal. Penal Code § 638.50(b).) Defendant's third-party trackers qualify as pen registers because they operate as

processes that capture and transmit the visitor's addressing/signaling information during the electronic communications necessary to load and use the Website.

3. California Penal Code § 638.51(a) prohibits installing or using a pen register without a court order. Defendant did not obtain a court order. Defendant installed and used pen register processes on Plaintiff's device without Plaintiff's informed, specific consent. Plaintiff seeks statutory damages and injunctive relief.

PARTIES

4. Plaintiff Vivek Shah is a natural person and resident of Los Angeles County, California.

5. Defendant owns, controls, and operates the Website and is responsible for the tracking technologies and third-party resources loaded by the Website.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

6. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction over this action because it arises under California law and the amount in controversy for Plaintiff's claims is within this Court's jurisdictional limits.

7. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because Defendant purposefully directs its Website and related commercial activities to California residents, including residents of Los Angeles County, and the unlawful tracking alleged herein occurred while Plaintiff was located in California.

8. Venue is proper in Los Angeles County because Plaintiff resides in Los Angeles County and accessed the Website in Los Angeles County, and the injury occurred in Los Angeles County.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

A. Basic Web Communication Mechanics (Foundation)

9. When a visitor opens a webpage, the visitor's browser sends an HTTP request to retrieve resources necessary to display and operate the website. The HTTP request necessarily includes addressing and signaling information, including the visitor's IP address and device/browser identifiers, so that servers and third parties can route responses and coordinate tracking.

10. A visitor's IP address is addressing information used to route internet communications. IP addresses are also capable of revealing location information such as state, city, and region, and are routinely used by advertising and analytics companies to identify and profile users.

B. Defendant's Use of Third-Party Tracking as "Pen Registers"

11. Defendant intentionally integrates and/or causes the Website to load third-party scripts, pixels, tags, SDKs, and related resources (collectively, "Trackers"). These Trackers execute automatically in a visitor's browser and cause the visitor's browser to transmit addressing/signaling information to third parties. Defendant selected, integrated, and controlled the third-party tracking technologies loaded by the Website and had the technical ability to prevent those technologies from executing prior to user consent.

12. The Trackers constitute "device[s] or process[es]" that record or decode dialing/routing/addressing/signaling information transmitted by the visitor's device as part of electronic communications to load and use the Website. (Cal. Penal Code § 638.50(b).)

13. The Trackers are not limited to functionality required to render the Website. They are used for purposes such as ad targeting, measurement, attribution, retargeting, audience-building, analytics, session tracking, identity resolution, and related commercial profiling.

C. Plaintiff's Visit and Injury

14. Within the applicable statute of limitations period, while located in Los Angeles County, California, Plaintiff accessed and interacted with the Website.

15. Defendant did not obtain any court order authorizing the installation or use of these pen register processes.

16. Plaintiff was injured contemporaneously when Defendant installed and/or used pen register processes during Plaintiff's interaction with the Website, without a court order and without Plaintiff's informed and specific consent.

17. Immediately upon Plaintiff opening the Website, and before Plaintiff clicked or interacted with any buttons, banners, or controls, the Website automatically caused Plaintiff's browser to initiate network communications with multiple third-party domains as part of its ordinary page-load behavior. These automatic communications occurred without any affirmative action by Plaintiff and involved the transmission of addressing or signaling information, including internet protocol routing information and device or browser identifiers, inherent in the initiation of such requests.

20. Upon immediate page load of [REDACTED] and without any affirmative action by Plaintiff other than opening the Website, the Website automatically initiated a third-party network request to www.google-analytics.com/g/collect (Google Analytics 4). The request URL transmitted identifier-class information including the Google measurement ID [REDACTED] client ID [REDACTED] session ID [REDACTED] page URL [REDACTED] page title [REDACTED] [REDACTED] screen resolution sr=980x700, browser and device metadata including [REDACTED] uaa=x86, [REDACTED] uab=64, uafvl=Chromium%3B148.0.7778.96%7CHeadlessChrome%3B148.0.7778.96%7CNot%252FA)Brand%3B99.0.0.0, uap=Windows, uapv=10.0, uamb=0, uaw=0, language ul=en-us, and page-load/session timing parameters including [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

21. The qualifying third-party request identified in paragraph 20 fired automatically and immediately upon page load and before Plaintiff clicked, accepted, rejected, dismissed, scrolled past, or otherwise affirmatively interacted with any portion of the Website, including any cookie or consent banner, settings link, or footer hyperlink to a Privacy Policy or Terms and Conditions. No cookie or consent banner was presented before the qualifying request fired, and any Privacy Policy or Terms hyperlink available only at the footer of the page does not constitute notice of or consent to the third-party tracking identified in paragraph 20. Plaintiff had no opportunity to provide informed consent before the qualifying request transmitted Plaintiff's information to www.google-analytics.com/g/collect (Google Analytics 4).

22. Plaintiff did not provide informed, specific, or prior consent for the third-party network communications described above. Those communications occurred automatically as part of the Website's page-load process, without Plaintiff affirmatively authorizing communications between Plaintiff's browser and the identified third-party domains.

23. A screenshot is attached as Exhibit A depicting representative third-party network communications initiated upon page load. The screenshot is provided for illustrative purposes only and reflects the Website's ordinary operation during a routine visit.

CAUSE OF ACTION

Violation of the California Invasion of Privacy Act – Use of a Pen Register

(Cal. Penal Code §§ 638.50(b), 638.51(a), 637.2)

24. California Penal Code § 638.51(a) prohibits any person from installing or using a pen register without first obtaining a court order.

25. A "pen register" is a "device or process that records or decodes dialing, routing, addressing, or signaling information transmitted by an instrument or facility from which a wire or electronic communication is transmitted, but not the contents of a communication." (Cal. Penal Code § 638.50(b).)

26. Defendant's Trackers are pen registers because they are device(s) and/or processes that capture and transmit dialing/routing/addressing/signaling information—including IP address and related device/browser identifiers—associated with Plaintiff's electronic communications to load and use the Website.

27. Defendant installed and/or used the Trackers on Plaintiff's device and caused Plaintiff's addressing/signaling information to be captured and transmitted to third parties.

28. Plaintiff did not provide prior informed and specific consent for Defendant to install or use these pen register processes.

29. Defendant did not obtain a court order authorizing installation or use of the Trackers.

30. Pursuant to Cal. Penal Code § 637.2(a)(1), Plaintiff seeks statutory damages for each violation of Cal. Penal Code § 638.51(a), as well as equitable relief.

PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays for judgment against Defendant as follows:

A. For statutory damages pursuant to California Penal Code § 637.2(a)(1) for each violation of California Penal Code § 638.51(a);

B. For all allowable costs of suit incurred herein;

C. For pre-judgment and post-judgment interest as permitted by law;

D. Plaintiff further seeks permanent injunctive relief requiring Defendant to immediately cease and permanently refrain from installing, deploying, or using pen register processes on Website visitors' devices without a court order and without informed, specific, and prior consent, including but not limited to the following corrective measures:

i. An order requiring Defendant to disable all third-party scripts, pixels, tags, SDKs, and tracking technologies that capture, decode, record, or transmit

addressing or signaling information (including IP addresses and device or browser identifiers) until lawful consent is obtained or a court order is secured;

ii. An order requiring Defendant to re-architect the Website so that no third-party network requests—other than those strictly necessary to render basic website content—are initiated upon page load prior to any user interaction;

iii. An order requiring Defendant to implement a true prior-consent mechanism, such that no third-party tracking processes execute unless and until a user has affirmatively and knowingly opted in;

iv. An order requiring Defendant to remove or replace any third-party services that inherently rely on pen register functionality unless Defendant can demonstrate compliance with California Penal Code § 638.51;

v. An order requiring Defendant to delete any addressing or signaling information previously collected through unlawful pen register use to the extent such deletion is technically feasible;

vi. An order granting such other and further equitable relief as the Court deems necessary to prevent future violations of the California Invasion of Privacy Act and to protect the privacy rights of California residents.

Dated: _____

/s/ Vivek Shah

Vivek Shah