

March 17, 2026

Via Email Only

Dean James Bullock
USC Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and
Sciences
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Ms. Julie Sone
ABC 7 News
500 Circle 7 Dr.
Glendale, CA 91201
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**Re: Demand for Inclusion of Antonio Villaraigosa
in Upcoming California Gubernatorial Debate**

Dear Dean Bullock and Ms. Sone:

I write on behalf of Antonio Villaraigosa to formally demand that ABC News and USC immediately rectify his exclusion from the upcoming California gubernatorial debate.

The very "Candidate Debate Criteria and Formula" published by Professor Christian Grose, on which your selection criteria purport to be based, establish precisely why Mayor Villaraigosa must be included in the debate.

Simply put, of the three criteria that govern the analysis, Mayor Villaraigosa unequivocally satisfies the first two, and under any good faith analysis satisfies the third.

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I. Polling Criterion

In applying the first of the three criteria – which pertains to polling – you cite a single poll as the basis for whom you believe should be included in the upcoming debate. That poll, a PPIC survey released on February 11, 2026, demonstrated unambiguously that Mayor Villaraigosa had outperformed Mr. Mahan by a 40% margin:

Antonio Villaraigosa - 5%
Matt Mahan - 3%

II. Fundraising Criterion

As to the second of the three criteria – which pertains to fundraising – publicly-available and independently verifiable records from the California Secretary of State, as of February 18, 2026, demonstrate the following:

Antonio Villaraigosa - \$6,560,209.63 Raised
Matt Mahan - \$3,722,500.00 Raised

Again, Mayor Villaraigosa unequivocally outperformed Mr. Mahan – by \$2,837,709.63, or 43% – as of the precise fundraising cutoff date your criteria specify.

III. “Days in the Race” Criterion

As to the last of the three criteria – which pertains to each candidate’s number of days in the gubernatorial race – any good faith analysis demonstrates that Mayor Villaraigosa satisfies the threshold for participation in the upcoming debate.

As demonstrated by the following chart, Mayor Villaraigosa’s candidacy preceded by many months the candidacies of other candidates whom you have allowed to participate in the upcoming debate:

Candidate	Candidacy Announced	# of months until June 2026
Antonio Villaraigosa	July 2024	23
Katie Porter	March 2025	15

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Xavier Becerra	April 2025	14
Tom Steyer	November 2025	7
Eric Swalwell	November 2025	7
Matt Mahan	January 2026	5

As the foregoing facts are all incontestable, we perceive no legitimate basis – and only impermissible pretext – for your decision to exclude Mayor Villaraigosa from the upcoming debate. Please remedy this error and communicate to me – in writing, and no later than close of business March 19, 2026 – your confirmation that Mayor Villaraigosa will be included in the debate. Failing our receipt of such a confirmation, we shall have no choice but to pursue Mayor Villaraigosa’s other legal remedies.

Sincerely,



Eric M. George

EMG:cb