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14 **UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT**

15 **NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

16 TESLA, INC.,

17 Plaintiff,

18 vs.

19 ALAMEDA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA;

20 Defendant.

21 Case Number: 4:20-cv-03186

22 **COMPLAINT FOR INJUNCTIVE AND  
23 DECLARATORY RELIEF**

**NATURE OF THE ACTION**

1  
2 1. As COVID-19 loomed, local officials scrambled to implement myriad measures  
3 protecting the Californians in their jurisdictions. The State stepped in to ensure California’s  
4 response was clear, uniform, and coordinated using state-wide regulations. On some issues, that  
5 meant establishing baseline policies, and on others, it meant choosing *the* policy across the state.

6 2. The Governor’s March 20, 2020 stay-at-home order sought to balance the need to  
7 protect Californians from infection against the need to maintain Californians’ access to vital  
8 supplies and services. In so doing, the Governor chose *the* policy on one issue: businesses  
9 classified by the federal government as “critical infrastructure” are essential to Californians and  
10 are allowed to continue operating as part of California’s coordinated response to COVID-19.

11 3. The Order was clear on this point: “I order that Californians working in these 16  
12 critical infrastructure sectors may continue their work because of the importance of these sectors  
13 to Californians’ health and well-being.” This purpose was to “establish consistency” and that  
14 “the supply chain must continue, and Californians must have access to such necessities as food,  
15 prescriptions, and health care.” This was not a state-level baseline inviting county innovation  
16 above and beyond a minimum; this is an order that certain essential businesses shall be permitted  
17 to remain open statewide to provide essential goods and services to all Californians.

18 4. Nevertheless, Alameda County decided that—notwithstanding the clear language  
19 and statewide logic of the Governor’s order on this point—it would insist that its prior (and  
20 subsequent) conflicting pronouncements controlled over the state-wide order. Alameda County  
21 thus arrogated to itself the power to force *closure* of businesses that the state government had  
22 ordered could remain *open* because they are federally-defined “critical infrastructure” serving  
23 vital security, safety, or economic needs of Californians.

1 5. Inexplicably, Alameda County proceeded to direct its shutdown at Tesla, even as  
2 Alameda County has simultaneously maintained and publicized a FAQ that expressly describes  
3 essential businesses in terms that encompass Tesla’s Fremont Facility:<sup>1</sup>

4 **My business installs distributed solar, storage, and/or electric vehicle charging**  
5 **systems – can it continue to operate?**

6 Yes, this is permissible construction activity and must comply with the Construction  
7 Project Safety Protocols in Appendix B of the Order. **Businesses may also operate to**  
8 **manufacture distributed energy resource components**, like solar panels.

9 6. What is more, the County has asserted that violations of its orders carry criminal  
10 penalties, even though it lacks statutory or other legal authority to do so. Thus, Alameda County  
11 has not only created a legal quagmire by wrongly declaring that its own orders trump the state-  
12 level orders, it has threatened jail time and significant fines for businesses and individuals that do  
13 not comply, even where they are clearly authorized by the State Order to continue critical  
14 infrastructure activities.

15 7. To be clear, Alameda County is not using the “existing authority of local health  
16 officers” to supplement a baseline set by the State, issuing policies “more restrictive than” or “in  
17 addition to” that baseline, as referenced in a May 4, 2020 Order. The County is making rules  
18 that directly contradict and undermine the policy announced by the Governor in his Orders.

19 8. Alameda County’s power-grab not only defies the Governor’s Order, but offends  
20 the federal and California constitutions. *First*, the County’s order violates the Due Process  
21 Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment because it fails to give reasonable notice to persons of  
22 ordinary intelligence of what is forbidden under the law. By prohibiting what the Governor’s  
23 Order expressly permits, the County’s Order puts businesses deemed critical to the nation’s  
24 wellbeing by the federal and state governments between a rock and a hard place—unable to  
25 discern what the applicable law permits, under threat of criminal prosecution. This is precisely  
26 the dilemma the Due Process Clause’s requirement of fair notice seeks to avoid, particularly

27 <sup>1</sup> <https://covid-19.acgov.org/index.page>.

1 where, as here, there is no procedure for Plaintiff even to challenge the County’s determination  
2 that it is not an essential business that may continue operations under the County’s Order.

3 9. **Second**, the County’s Order discriminates against identically situated parties  
4 without any rational basis and thereby violates the Fourteenth Amendment’s Equal Protection  
5 Clause. Even as at least one neighboring county is allowing car manufacturing to resume,  
6 Alameda County continues to insist—in violation of the Governor’s Order and against reason—  
7 that what is permitted in a neighboring county will endanger the public health if permitted to also  
8 occur within Alameda County borders. Furthermore, even as Alameda County itself declares  
9 businesses like Tesla essential, it somehow simultaneously insists, without rational explanation,  
10 that Tesla is to remain shut down

11 10. **Third**, a county may only “make and enforce within its limits . . . ordinances and  
12 regulations not in conflict with general laws.” Calif. Const., art. XI, § 7. By purporting to  
13 override an express order of the Governor of California, Alameda County has far exceeded its  
14 ambit under the California Constitution. In sum, the County’s Orders threaten not only to close  
15 businesses supplying critical infrastructure, thereby violating multiple federal and state  
16 constitutional principles, but also to jail people pursuant to criminal statutes that simply do not  
17 apply here. To that extent, the County’s Orders should be declared void and without legal effect.

18 **THE PARTIES**

19 11. Plaintiff Tesla, Inc., is a corporation organized under the laws of Delaware, with  
20 its principal place of business in California.

21 12. Defendant Alameda County, California, is a local government entity organized  
22 under the Constitution and laws of the State of California.

23 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

24 13. The Court has subject matter jurisdiction over the claims asserted in this action  
25 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 (federal question) because this action involves interpretation of the  
26 Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S.

1 Constitution (U.S. Const. amend. XIV) and because the action seeks to prevent Defendants from  
2 interfering with federal rights.

3 14. Jurisdiction is also appropriate in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1343(a)(3)–  
4 (4) to redress the deprivation, under color of any State law, statute, ordinance, regulation, custom  
5 or usage, of any right, privilege, or immunity secured by the Constitution, and to secure equitable  
6 or other relief under any Act of Congress providing for the protection of civil rights.

7 15. This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff’s state law claim pursuant  
8 to 28 U.S.C. § 1367(a) because Plaintiff’s state claim is so related to its federal claims that they  
9 form part of the same case or controversy under Article III of the United States Constitution.

10 16. Venue is properly vested in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391 because all  
11 defendants reside in this district and most of the conduct that underlies this action occurred in the  
12 Northern District of California.

13 17. There is a present and actual controversy between the parties.

14 18. The relief requested is authorized pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201 and 2202  
15 (declaratory judgment), 28 U.S.C. § 1651(a) (injunctive relief), and 42 U.S.C. § 1988 (right to  
16 costs, including attorneys’ fees).

17 **SUBSTANTIVE ALLEGATIONS**

18 **I. THE GOVERNOR’S STAY-AT-HOME ORDER**

19 19. On March 4, 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom declared a state of  
20 emergency to exist in California in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

21 20. Subsequently, on March 19, 2020, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order  
22 N-33-20 (the “**Governor’s Order**”). The Governor’s Order directs all residents “to immediately  
23 heed the current State public health directives,” including an order of the state public health  
24 officer reprinted in the Governor’s Order.

25 21. The Governor’s Order “order[ed] all individuals living in the State of California  
26 to stay home or at their place of residence except as needed to maintain continuity of operations  
27 of the federal critical infrastructure sector as outlined at <https://www.cisa.gov/identifying->  
28

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