Filed: 10/30/2026
ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBES
TRIBAL COURT
COVELO, CA 95428
LB

IN THE TRIBAL COURT FOR THE ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBES

COVELO, CALIFORNIA

RONLAD LINCOLN, SR., Plaintiff, vs. ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBE ELECTION BOARD, Defendant.	Case No.: RVIT-CV-2026-0039-JW **ORDER DISMISSING PETITION WITHOUT LEAVE TO AMEND**

This matter comes before the Court on the Civil Petition filed by Petitioner Ronald Lincoln, Sr., who is self-represented, against Respondent Round Valley Indian Tribes Election Board (the "Election Board"). The Court has reviewed the Petition and its attachments. For the reasons stated below, the Petition is **DISMISSED WITHOUT LEAVE TO AMEND.**

I. BACKGROUND

On September 8, 2026, the Election Board notified Petitioner by letter that his application for a candidate seat on the Tribal Council "did not qualify." The letter gave one reason: a complete nomination packet must include "[a] Valid fiscal signature." The letter invited Petitioner to nominate himself in the next election and advised that his filing fee had been requested refunded. Petitioner's handwritten notation on the letter states that he received it on September 16, 2026.

Petitioner filed this Petition on October 23, 2026, and served it on the Election Board by personal delivery the same day. The Petition alleges that the Election Board used false

statements to disqualify him and that the term "valid fiscal signature" does not appear in any tribal election document. Petitioner cites Article V, Sections 5.01(D) and 5.02(A)(5) of the Round Valley Indian Tribes Election Ordinance and includes his completed Debts and Offenses Form B-9, a receipt for his election packet fee, and excerpts of the Election Ordinance. The only relief Petitioner requests is "[t]o be qualified for candidate position on Tribal Council."

The Tribal Council election is scheduled for November 3, 2026, eleven days after the Petition was filed.

II. DISCUSSION

A. The Relief Sought

Although styled as a civil petition, the Petition seeks a single form of relief: an order qualifying Petitioner as a candidate in the pending Tribal Council election. In practical effect, that is a request for a mandatory injunction directing the Election Board to reverse its eligibility determination and alter the ballot for an election set to take place within days. The Court evaluates the Petition accordingly.

B. Courts Should Not Alter Elections on the Eve of Voting

Decisions of the United States Supreme Court do not bind this Court. The Court nonetheless finds persuasive the reasoning of a consistent line of federal authority holding that courts should not alter election rules or procedures on the eve of an election. *See Purcell v. Gonzalez*, 549 U.S. 1, 4-6 (2006) (per curiam); *Republican Nat'l Comm. v. Democratic Nat'l Comm.*, 589 U.S. 423, 424 (2020) (per curiam) ("This Court has repeatedly emphasized that lower federal courts should ordinarily not alter

the election rules on the eve of an election."). The concerns underlying that principle; namely, the orderly administration of elections, the avoidance of voter confusion, and the need for an adequate record before a court intervenes, apply with equal force to the elections of the Round Valley Indian Tribes.

In *Purcell*, the district court denied a request for a preliminary injunction against Arizona's voter identification requirements, and the plaintiffs appealed. 549 U.S. at 2-4. On October 5, 2006, about a month before the November 7 general election, the Court of Appeals entered an injunction pending appeal, without explanation and before the district court had issued findings of fact. *Id.* at 3-5. The Supreme Court vacated that injunction on October 20. It explained that a court asked to enjoin election procedures shortly before an election must weigh, in addition to the harms to the parties, "considerations specific to election cases," including that "[c]ourt orders affecting elections, especially conflicting orders, can themselves result in voter confusion and consequent incentive to remain away from the polls. As an election draws closer, that risk will increase." *Id.* at 4-5. The Court concluded: "Given the imminence of the election and the inadequate time to resolve the factual disputes, our action today shall of necessity allow the election to proceed. . . ." *Id.* at 5-6.

C. Application

The timing here is more compressed than in *Purcell*. There, about a month separated the appellate injunction from election day, and the Supreme Court found even that interval inadequate to resolve the factual disputes. Here, the Petition was filed

eleven days before the election, and the election is now only days away.

The compressed timeline is also of Petitioner's own making. The Election Board's decision is dated September 8, 2026, and Petitioner acknowledges receiving it on September 16, 2026. Yet, he waited more than five weeks to seek relief from this Court, and nothing in the Petition explains that delay.

Resolving the Petition on its merits would require the Court to determine, among other things, what the Election Board meant by a "valid fiscal signature," whether that requirement is authorized by the Election Ordinance, and whether Petitioner's nomination packet satisfied the Ordinance's requirements. Those questions turn on facts and on the interpretation of tribal law, and the Election Board is entitled to a fair opportunity to respond to them. They cannot be fairly resolved, with an adequate record, in the time remaining before the election.

Finally, an order directing the Election Board to add a candidate to the ballot days before voting would disrupt the administration of the election and risk confusion among the Tribes' voters, which are precisely the harms *Purcell* warns against. The Election Board, the other candidates, and the tribal electorate all have a substantial interest in the election proceeding as scheduled.

Because the only relief Petitioner seeks—qualification as a candidate in the November 3, 2026, election—cannot appropriately be granted, the Petition must be dismissed. The Court expresses no view on the merits of Petitioner's challenge to the Election Board's determination, including whether the "valid fiscal

signature" requirement is authorized by the Election Ordinance or whether the Election Board properly applied the Ordinance's fee provisions. The dismissal is therefore without prejudice to Petitioner challenging the results of the election according to the applicable provision of Tribal law.

III. ORDER

For the foregoing reasons, the Petition is **DISMISSED WITHOUT LEAVE TO AMEND.** The dismissal is without prejudice to any timely challenge Plaintiff may file under Article XIII of the Election Ordinance.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: October 29, 2026

Joseph J. Wiseman

JOSEPH J. WISEMAN
Chief Judge, Round Valley Tribal Court

ROUND VALLEY INDIAN TRIBES

A Sovereign Nation of Confederated Tribes

Round Valley Tribal Court

Administrative Office: Tribal Court, 77826 Covelo Road, Covelo, California 95428 Phone: 707-983-8227 | Fax: 707-983-6590

PROOF OF SERVICE

I declare that I am a resident of or employed in the County of Mendocino,

State of California. I am over the age of 18 years. The name and address of my

Residence or business is 77826 Covelo Road

On 10/30/2026 (Date), I served the October 30, 2026 order Dismissing Petition without leave to Amend (Description of document(s)) in Case No. RVIT-CV-2026-0039-SW (Description of document(s) continued) (PERB Case No., if known)

on the parties listed below by (check the applicable method(s)):

- ☐ placing a true copy thereof enclosed in a sealed envelope for collection and delivery by the United States Postal Service or private delivery service following ordinary business practices with postage or other costs prepaid;
- ☐ personal delivery;
- ☒ electronic service - I served a copy of the above-listed document(s) by transmitting via electronic mail (e-mail) or via e-PERB to the electronic service address(es) listed below on the date indicated. (*May be used only if the party being served has filed and served a notice consenting to electronic service or has electronically filed a document with the Board. See PERB Regulation 32140(b).*)

(*Include here the name, address and/or e-mail address of the Respondent and/or any other parties served.*)

RVIT Election Board - electionboard@rvit.org

Ronald Lincoln 22450 Hendersm Rd. Covelo, Ca 95488

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing is true and correct and that this declaration was executed on 10/30/2026 (Date)

at Covelo (City) CA (State).

Laura Betts (Type or print name) (Signature)