



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY — STANISLAUS COUNTY
Jeff Laugero, District Attorney

FACT SHEET

State of California vs. Scott Peterson

April 16, 2026 - The Stanislaus County District Attorney's Office is committed to conviction integrity. This is not only an obligation to the community we serve, but victims, their families, and the accused. Part of that process requires the review of claims of actual innocence and new evidence even after conviction. Since Scott Peterson's trial, he has brought forward the same or similar claims of "new evidence" in more than a dozen pleadings. Prosecutors in this office, members of the Attorney General's Office, the trial court and reviewing courts including Superior and Appellate Court Judges and California Supreme Court Justices have evaluated these claims for over two decades. Each time, Peterson's conviction has been upheld, most recently including a rejection of his claim of actual innocence in April 2026. This fact sheet was created to provide a factual, court-verified accounting of the claims made by Scott Peterson from the time of his trial and conviction by jury to the latest rejection in 2026.

Peterson's Claim vs. Court-Verified Facts

Information included below is based on an April 27, 2026 Court Ruling by San Mateo County Superior Court Judge Elizabeth M. Hill denying Scott Peterson's Third Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus

Peterson's Claim of "New Evidence"	Court Verified Facts	Same/Similar Claim Rejected By*
<i>Burglars connected to a nearby "Medina" break-in were responsible for Laci's disappearance, not Scott Peterson.</i>	The theory "kept expanding" over time and was "speculative, at best." The same burglary/van theory was raised by Peterson and rejected by the jury at the 2004 trial. The recently unsealed 2004 transcript confirms defense counsel was already discussing this issue at the time of trial. <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026</i>	☒ Jury ☒ Trial Judge ☒ Supreme Court ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>Eyewitness accounts of Laci's morning walk and the clothing she wore support Peterson's account and undercut the prosecution's timeline.</i>	Peterson's own statements, proffered evidence and eyewitness accounts were found "inconsistent with the condition of Laci's remains, in conflict with the evidence and likely untrue." <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026</i>	☒ Jury ☒ Trial Judge ☒ Supreme Court ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>Laci knew about and had seen Peterson's boat — evidence never previously disclosed.</i>	This claim was "presented at trial and not new evidence." <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026</i>	☒ Jury ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>Police and prosecutors intentionally, or in bad faith, destroyed or withheld evidence favorable to the defense.</i>	These accusations were "either procedurally barred, immaterial or without merit." <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026</i>	☒ Jury (Medinas' Safe) ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition

Peterson's Claim of "New Evidence"	Court Verified Facts	Same/Similar Claim Rejected By*
<i>New scientific analysis of Conner's gestational age shows he and Laci died after December 24, 2002 when Peterson was under surveillance.</i>	This challenge to the prosecution's expert testimony had already been raised and rejected on the merits by the California Supreme Court. Procedurally barred, not new. <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026</i>	☒ Jury ☒ Supreme Court ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>New analysis of tides and currents shows the bodies' recovery locations are inconsistent with the prosecution's dump-site theory.</i>	This position was previously raised and was rejected by the California Supreme Court. Procedurally barred. <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026</i>	☒ Trial Judge ☒ Supreme Court ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>The cadaver dog "Trimble's" scent detection at Berkeley Marina on Dec. 28, 2002 was unreliable and should be reconsidered.</i>	This claim was already litigated and was rejected by the California Supreme Court. Procedurally barred. <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026</i>	☒ Trial Judge ☒ Supreme Court ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>The defense first learned of the "Aponte tip" (an inmate discussing the burglary) in late October 2004, which was evidence law enforcement sat on for years.</i>	The unsealed 2004 transcript shows Peterson's own investigator had already spoken directly with Lt. Aponte and was actively tracking the tip down before that date, while the defense simultaneously told the court it knew nothing about it. <i>Unsealed Transcript, ordered unsealed Mar. 25, 2026</i>	☒ Trial Judge ☒ Supreme Court ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>Police secretly investigated a pawned Croton watch matching Laci's, and the prosecution suppressed related information.</i>	Records and the unsealed transcript show a private investigator hired by Peterson obtained the Feb. 14, 2003 pawn ticket, and Peterson's own team attempted to redeem the watch themselves. The court called the petition's account "troubled" and found it "treads unsettlingly close to the bounds of permissible advocacy under Rule 3.3." This was the second such admonishment in this ruling. <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026, p. 78</i>	☒ Jury ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>New DNA testing relating to items associated with an orange van (mattress cuttings, fuel container) and items that washed ashore in the San Francisco Bay (plastic bag with tape and wad of duct tape) could exonerate Peterson.</i>	The 2025 motion sought testing of the exact same items already denied testing in 2024. The court found this request procedurally barred, deficient and lacking merit, citing inconsistencies in the van-sighting reports, the defense's "Bay theories," and physical conditions of the evidence (barnacles, thread-counts, etc.) <i>Order Denying DNA Testing Request, Apr. 2, 2026</i> ***In 2024, the court reviewed the same claims. The court found the defense failed to develop a reasonable probability that Laci had ever been in the orange van during the commission of the crime and that there was no evidence of blood on the mattress. The court also found that the condition of the items from the bay suggested they were in the water for a different amount of time than the victims' remains. <i>Order Denying DNA Testing Request, May 29, 2024</i>	☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>This new evidence (i.e. Peterson's claims regarding what Laci was wearing, Laci sightings, Laci knowledge of the boat, botched</i>	Judge Hill found that all of Peterson's claims, taken individually or together, fell far short of proving actual innocence.	☒ Jury ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition

Peterson's Claim of "New Evidence"	Court Verified Facts	Same/Similar Claim Rejected By*
<i>police investigation, destruction of evidence and the Medina burglars) establishes Peterson's actual innocence.</i>	- Peterson's theories about the Medina burglars and the number of them kept expanding and was speculative, at best. - Peterson's own statements, proffered evidence and his eyewitness accounts regarding Laci's morning walk and the clothes she was wearing were found to be inconsistent with the condition of Laci's remains, in conflict with the evidence and likely untrue. - Peterson's claim that Laci knew about the boat was presented at trial and not new evidence. - Peterson's accusations that police and prosecutors either intentionally or in bad faith destroyed or withheld various pieces of evidence were either procedurally barred, immaterial or without merit. The ruling also references the 2020 California Supreme Court's findings. <i>People v. Peterson</i> (2020) 10 Cal.5th 409, 452–453. <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026, p. 115</i>	
<i>Peterson was convicted because of who he was (his affair, his demeanor) rather than what the evidence showed.</i>	"Not so." His statements predicting Laci's disappearance were "powerful evidence of pre-planning," and his lies about the affair were "evidence of consciousness of guilt." He made the "first holiday without her" remark to Amber Frey the same day he purchased the boat. <i>Order Denying Third Petition, Apr. 27, 2026, p. 47</i>	☒ Jury ☒ Trial Judge ☒ Supreme Court ☒ Post-Conviction Motions ☒ 2026 Habeas Petition
<i>Jury did not get to see Peterson's videotaped boat experiment.</i>	The California Supreme Court reviewed this claim during Peterson's 2020 appeal and upheld the trial judge's decision to exclude the videotaped boat experiment, finding it unreliable. The Court concluded that the defense failed to show that the boat used in the experiment was sufficiently similar to Peterson's boat or that the experiment was conducted under comparable weather conditions and at a similar location. The Court also observed that the defense employee's actions suggested an intent to undermine the experiment's validity by deliberately trying to capsize the boat—behavior inconsistent with how a killer would likely act, as a killer would have an incentive to shift weight to keep the boat from capsizing. <i>People v. Scott Peterson</i> (2020) 10 Cal.5th 409, 460-464.)	☒ Trial Judge ☒ Supreme Court

*Every time Peterson and his defense team raise this claim or a version of this claim, it was rejected.

Evidence of Guilt Cited by the Court

From Judge Elizabeth M. Hill's April 27, 2026 order denying Scott Peterson's
Third Petition for Writ of Habeas Corpus
San Mateo County Superior Court, Case No. SC055500A / HC-3201

- Hair fragments matching the mitochondrial DNA of Sharon Rocha, Laci's mother, were found clamped in the jaws of a pair of pliers inside Peterson's boat. (*Order, pp. 46–47*)
- Concrete debris found in the boat's cover matched both Peterson's homemade boat anchor and debris on his workbench at his warehouse. (*Order, pp. 47, 113*)
- Peterson lied to police when confronted with evidence of his affair with Amber Frey. (*Order, p. 47*)
- Weeks before Laci disappeared, Peterson told Frey and later confirmed in a recorded conversation that he had “lost his wife” and that it would be his “first holiday without her.” This occurred the same day he bought the boat. Judge Hill said Peterson’s statements predicting Laci’s disappearance were powerful evidence of pre-planning and his lies about the existence of the affair during the police investigation were evidence of consciousness of guilt. (*Order, p. 47*)
- Peterson bought a fishing boat shortly before Laci disappeared but told no one, including her family. (*Order, p. 46*)
- In the weeks before Laci vanished, Peterson researched bay currents where her body was later found. (*Order, p. 46*)
- Peterson could not explain what he was fishing for on the day Laci disappeared. (*Order, p. 46*)
- Peterson made repeated, secretive trips back to the marina in the weeks after she went missing. (*Order, p. 46*)
- In the weeks after her disappearance, Peterson sold Laci’s car, looked into selling the house, and converted the nursery into storage. These are steps the court said indicated he already knew Laci and Conner were never coming back. (*Order, p. 46*)
- Laci's and Conner's remains washed ashore roughly 90 miles from home, near the area where Peterson admitted he had been fishing that day. (*Order, pp. 46, 113–114*)
- The court found that even considering all of Peterson's claims together, they still did not establish his innocence. (*Order, p. 116*)

“As demonstrated in the court’s review of the 13 previously asserted claims raised and denied either as procedurally barred, meritless, or both, much of what Petitioner pleads now is neither new, admissible, nor material. The court has reviewed the allegations and supporting evidence of the petition against the trial record, in its entirety. Considering in its totality that which is genuinely newly discovered, admissible to a prima facie standard, and material against the evidence adduced at trial in support of a conviction, the court remains unpersuaded that Petitioner has stated a prima facie claim for relief on the basis of actual innocence.”

— *Order Denying Third Petition, p. 116*

For more verified facts and the timeline of the events surrounding the disappearance and murders of Laci and Conner, please see the linked document (pages 3–197). The information comes directly from evidence presented to the jury and documented in official court and police records.

Statement Of Facts

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