



CALIFORNIA GRAND JURY SYSTEM

Course Prepared for an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) Offering

Course Description:

California is one of the few states that have empowered county grand juries with a civil watchdog function: responding to citizen complaints and initiating their own investigations of county and other local government agencies. The desired outcome of these investigations is the improvement of government effectiveness and efficiency.

Course Goals:

This course outline has been prepared by the California Grand Juror's Association whose goal is to bring broader recognition of the California Grand Jury system to the citizens of this state. The purpose of this course is to learn about the constitution and function of the grand jury, how it has helped to improve government, how it actually operates, and how course registrants and other citizens can apply to serve on the grand jury of any of the 58 counties in California.

Courses have been given at California Polytechnic University San Luis Obispo and California State University San Jose. An abbreviated version has been given at California State University Fullerton. Other sites are under evaluation.

Course Information:

Three, two-hour class meetings

As an OLLI course, no textbook is required

OLLI offerings do not offer college credit, nor are grades issued

Enrollees are required to be 50 years of age or older

When putting a course together, it is strongly suggested that there be a course moderator whose responsibility it will be to introduce the various speakers who will address the class. Also, the moderator should be responsible to see that adequate numbers of whatever handouts are used will be available to the enrollees. The moderator will also be expected to coordinate the various speakers and make certain the guest speakers receive written information on what material is to be covered and know what their time schedule will be.

It is desirable to consider asking for a speaker from the local judiciary system, preferably a presiding judge or, at least, a judge who has recent experience with a grand jury in his/her county. Another speaker who would be important to the success of this course would be the administrative person in charge of the grand jury in his/her county. This person would be able to explain the nuts and bolts of the grand jury workings in a given county. The remaining speakers should be former grand jurors who are able to explain actual jury work to the enrollees. The CGJA will be pleased to work with you in forming your course or will be able to supply the necessary grand jury lecturers.

Session I (2 hours):

Introduction by Moderator and explanation of role of CGJA in providing this course

What is the Grand Jury? How is it constituted? What is it charged to do? Why does it exist?

History:

- a) Anglo-Saxon origins
- b) in the United States
- c) in California
- d) in your county

The Grand Jury and the Law

Use of the Penal Code and other statutes

Accusation

Interaction with Presiding Judge and County Counsel

Subpoena power, oath of confidentiality, admonishment

Speaker from local judiciary system

Session II (2 hours):

How does the Grand Jury do its work? What are the benefits to the County, to the local citizenry and the County government?

Operational concepts: autonomy, confidentiality, the rule of 2, the rule of 12, continuity. This session can be characterized as a typical day in the life of a county grand jury.

Case Histories – examples of actual Grand Jury reports that made a difference in the particular county where the course is being offered

The California Grand Jurors Association: What is it? What does it do?

Session III (2 hours):

Why become a grand juror? How and when to apply? What is the selection process?

What are the benefits **to the juror** of service on the grand jury?

The Impact of the Final Report and the Role of the Media

The Local County Grand Jurors' Association (when applicable): What is it, what does it do?

End of Course: The Moderator will give evaluation sheets to each enrollee and ask for them to be returned before they leave.

Suggested handouts:

- The CGJA brochure
- A recent copy of the CGJA *Journal*
- Information that County has for potential jurors, e.g., application form, a recent completed report, a brochure.
- Complaint form.
- Business card of the administrative person from that county

For more information, please contact:

Betty J. Mattea (Northern California)

415-492-8857

bjmattea@sonic.net

Jerry Lewi (Southern California)

805-532-1321

cgiaprguy@roadrunner.com