



Grand Jurors' Journal

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President's Message

By Jerry Lewi

It was my distinct pleasure and honor to visit our two new chapters in Kern and Kings

County and officially induct them into the association. Both groups are enthusiastic and look forward to a strong relationship with the association. It has been my pleasure to have fulfilled my goal of visiting every one of our now 12 chapters since taking this office. My statement at the time of my election that chapters are the one part of the organization I know least about has been corrected. It has been very interesting to note the differences in chapters throughout the state. I reiterate my plea to the chapters to please advise me or any Board member of what more the state association can do to improve the working relations with the chapters.

I am also pleased to welcome Ivor Thomas, Butte County, as our newest director. Ivor has been appointed to fill the unexpired term of Jack Simpson who resigned. Ivor has just finished his service as Foreman of the Butte County Grand Jury. He is eager to work wherever we need him and I am sure he will be an effective Board Member.

The training season will be complete by the time you receive this Journal. I was personally pleased that we had 65 trainees at Fullerton, the first time we have had a seminar "Below the Tehachapis" in nearly ten years. Hopefully we can continue that practice in future years. Training Chair Sherry Chesny estimates we will have trained over 600 new grand jurors this year. This would be our highest number in history. Sherry and her committee deserve great praise for their hard work that made this all happen.

Please notice the announcement about a ballot measure that you will receive along with your ballot for voting for directors. Please consider the issue carefully and vote on it.

25th ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By Harry Tully, committee chair

Sign up now for the 25th Annual Conference October 19, 2006 and the Retreat for the Board of Directors October 20, 2006. There will be a tour of some Shasta County points of interest on October 18 at 3:00 PM followed by a no-host dinner at a Mexican restaurant. Details are available on-line <www.cgja.org> and in inserts in this *Journal*.

The Conference Committee is soliciting public service announcements (PSAs) and other tools your jury has used to recruit jurors. We would like you to share these with the conference attendees in a panel discussion format. Please contact me at (530) 224-9961 or htully@aol.com to submit your entries.

I want to remind you of the many points of interest in this area including the Sundial Bridge, tours through Shasta Dam and Shasta Caverns. We hope you will come to the conference and stay a few extra days to enjoy the area. There is a shuttle service from the Redding Airport to the Red Lion Inn.

Conference committee chairman Harry Tully and members Bert Aarsen, Marcia Caranci, Mel Coster, Joan Day, Jean Hall, Karen Jahr, Duane Mason, Carole Quick and Norma Taylor are looking forward meeting you and welcoming you to our county.

Summary of Board Actions

The CGJA Board of Directors took the following Actions at the May 22, 2006 regular meeting

- The minutes of the February 27, 2006 special minutes were approved by a roll call vote.
- A motion to remove Director Jack Simpson was tabled to the July regular meeting so that the President can attempt to secure a written resignation from Director Simpson.
- Approved by voice vote that: (1) Guidelines for members attending Board meetings will be established along with the agenda posting on the Website (2) posting of an agenda would be followed by posting the approved minutes, each of which will be removed as new agendas and approved minutes are issued.
- Replace the current Section 5.304 b. of the P&P to read “The MRC is required to provide to the Nominations Committee in the election of members to serve on the Board of Directors as of a date specified by the Nominations Committee a list of CGJA members in good standing and eligible to vote. The MRC is also required to provide to any other CGJA committee a list of CGJA members in good standing and eligible to vote. The Chairperson of the MRC is charged with the responsibility to comply with provisions of California Code Section 6330 to provide copies of such lists of voting members when requested by a CGJA member in good standing to be used for the purpose of supporting a write-in candidate or taking a position on issues in other elections where the Board asks advice of the membership,” was approved
- Approved the appointment of Angelo Rolando Award Committee.
- Approved to select co-parliamentarians from among the current directors. These individuals shall be nominated and elected by the Board as the first order of business at the July 25th meeting and shall immediately assume their roles.
- Approve a revised draft letter responding to a Letter to the Editor in the April Journal
- Approve distribution of the 2006 Compendium to the 58 grand juries at a charge equal to the approximate cost of the Compendium.

Committee Reports

Membership Chapter Relations

Owen Haxton, Chair

It was reported in the last *Journal* that Kern County Chapter and Kings County Chapter received Board approval bringing the total of chapters to twelve. Then the question was posed Now, what county will be next? The response was soon in coming – A group of current and past jurors from Fresno County have indicated they wish to organize a chapter and apply to join CGJA and shortly after a similar group from San Benito County requested information on forming a chapter of CGJA. It is truly an upper to receive such calls.

It is also gratifying when members respond to MRC requests to complete a member interest form. The completed Membership Resource questionnaire has reconfirmed the exceptional level of talents within the CGJA membership. A big thanks to the members

who responded. Your forms have been forwarded to committee chairs that should be contacting those members shortly. When next you speak to MRC committee members Paul Libeu and Ray Hoffman, express your appreciation to them for coordinating this effort.”

But to the pressing business of today - Membership renewal. I would like to say that renewals are coming in just like in past years, but as this is my first year in this position I can only report that as of July 20 there were 140 new and renewal applications. Over the past five years CGJA has averaged 333 members. So, are renewals normal? Looks like we need about 200 renewals before the grace period ends on August 29th.

Now is the time to renew.

O. K. you ask what you get for your dues? You have the opportunity to elect 24 of your fellow members to the Board of Directors. You receive their time, their energy and the product of their effort at no additional charge to you. Training sessions are provided by CGJA and are staffed by your fellow members without receiving a stipend. The most visible benefit is of course, the six copies of the *Journal* you receive each year. Perhaps the most important benefit of which you are hardly aware, as a group, CGJA volunteers are representing each of you in our efforts to monitor new proposals by State Government and address proposed changes to the California Grand Jury System before they are enacted by the legislature.

I could go on, but the guideline is 300 words.

In conclusion, I am getting my money's worth. I hope you think you are. See you on the Treasurers books as a paid-up voting member in good standing.

Operations

Les Day, Chair

You have reached ACTIVITY CENTRAL...October 19 is only two months away! Time to finalize plans for attending the CGJA 25th anniversary annual conference. Fine time of the year to visit Redding and share in the celebration with other grand jurors from throughout California. Complete details of the gathering are found in this issue of the Journal and at <www.cgja.org>, including the tour and welcome dinner scheduled for October 18 (3:00-9:40 pm). SEE YOU SOON!

Kudos to Anthony Noce and all Kern County for supplying a treasure trove of past Grand Jury Final Reports. A total of thirty-two counties and one hundred twenty documents were contributed to the historic preservation and now, archiving of important records from California civil grand juries going back to 1963. Thanks to CGJA President Jerry Lewi for the matrix of reports found and shipping logistics. Also of note, Tuolumne County has joined the ranks of electronically available websites, including a "ten-year index" of reports.

My thanks to Orley Ryals for his guidance in finding the link.

One last challenge, (of course, you've read this far)...let me hear from all of you in the next two weeks on your preference for the CGJA 26th annual conference (mid-Oct., 2007) at: A) Wyndham Hotel, San Jose or B) San Francisco (city or airport area). Please respond to: <bearpaws@sunset.net> or (530) 778-3368 phone/fax.

Training

Sherry Chesny, Chair

The Training Committee is pleased to report that its 2006 re-introduction of a truly Southern California seminar venue was a success. First tried in 1999 with the support and encouragement of the LaVerne School of Law, and then discontinued due to anticipated attendance problems, adding a seminar south of the Tehachapi's has long been a goal of CGJA. Southern California has large, but relatively few, counties so that it is difficult to get enough jurors to attend a training event to warrant the event's cost. However, this year 65 jurors from Imperial, Inyo, Orange, San Bernardino, San Diego and Santa Barbara counties attended the two day program in Fullerton, and appeared quite satisfied with the program. The Training Committee wishes to thank the CGJA Board for making the leap of faith that was required to underwrite this program.

From Here and There!

Grand Jury gets news of foreman's death before a ceremony

By Michelle L. Klampe, Ventura Star

It was supposed to be a celebration, but the annual Grand Jury discharge and installation ceremony was instead a somber affair after jury members learned the foreman who had led them through their work all year had died.

"My sad news to report to you is the foreperson of the 2005-2006 Grand Jury, Jim Dekker, died this morning," Presiding Judge John R. Smiley told a shocked audience in the Ventura County Hall of Justice.

James "Jim" Dekker, 70, of Thousand Oaks, served two terms on the 19-member Grand Jury, which is charged with investigating citizen complaints and oversight of local government. Dekker, who had a history of cardiac problems, died of natural causes at his home early Friday morning, according to the Ventura County Medical Examiner-Coroner's office.

The jurors, who were sequestered upon their arrival so they could be told of Dekker's death, filed into the courtroom, many of them clutching tissues and wiping away tears. Forewoman pro-tem Esther Bleuel presented the jury's final report on behalf of Dekker.

"Those of you who knew Jim personally know he was honored and proud to be the foreperson of this Grand Jury," Bleuel said. "The hallmark of this Grand Jury has been integrity, congeniality and a common sense of purpose."

Smiley, who got to know Dekker during his service on the Grand Jury, lauded the foreman and the rest of the jurors for the year of work they put in, calling it "government at its best."

"I could not be more proud of what this Grand Jury has accomplished," he said. In all, the Grand Jury issued 11 reports on a wide range of issues, including affordable housing in the county, violations of the Brown Act and municipal codes by members of the Thousand Oaks City Council, and budget issues at the Ventura County Community College District.

The jury also tackled the controversial Channel Islands Harbor dispute, issuing a report Monday clearing the harbor's director of charges of malfeasance brought by Supervisor John Flynn. After reviewing documents, testimony and public meetings, the jurors found "no basis for allegations of corruption, favoritism, fraud, or impropriety" involving the awarding of contracts or long-term leases at the county-owned harbor in the Oxnard area. To ensure the Grand Jury's work continues to be strong in the future, Smiley is planning to establish an advisory group of Grand Jury alumni that will help with future jury selection and provide other assistance. Dekker brought the idea to Smiley about three weeks ago, and the judge agreed it was a good one.

"Quite simply, it's going to be the Dekker group," Smiley said. "It's one thing we could do in Jim's memory to preserve the Grand Jury system into the future."

Chapter News

Solano Chapter

By Wanda Kiger-Tucker, President

The Solano County Fourth Annual Picnic was enjoyed by all despite the heat wave. Many thanks to our host Don Pippo for his quality food, gracious service, and beautiful private park. The barbecue ribs, pork, and chicken were outstanding as always!

The Chapter was disappointed when no word was received earlier in the summer regarding training support for local seminars. We have provided a support team to the Training Committee for seminars at Sacramento, Concord, or Walnut Creek for five years and were looking forward to doing so again. On the assumption that we had summarily dismissed, without notice, most of us had made other plans. Then, at the midnight hour, only two weeks prior to the training date, we received a phone call plea for volunteers to help at the Concord training seminar. A few members who had no other commitments with the spirit to help out immediately volunteered to assist the CGJA at Concord. Special thanks is extended to those Solano members that went to the training seminar rescue. Perhaps we will be given the opportunity to provide our support in full force again next year.

To Members Of The California Grand Juror's Association

Nominations for election to the CGJA Board of Directors are open.

By Diane Masini Nominating Committee Chair

Nominations for election to the CGJA Board of Directors are open. We are seeking new

nominees as there are several Directors currently serving who will not seek reelection. Having new Directors each year brings fresh ideas and energy to the Board. Every year we elect one-half of our Board of 24 Directors, four from each of our three regions. Directors are expected to attend monthly telephonic Board and committee meetings -and serve on at least one of our standing committees (Finance, Legal, Operations, Public Relations, Membership and Training). The term of office is two years.

To be eligible to have your name placed in nomination as a Director for the CGJA, you must have paid your 2006-07 dues by August 10, 2006 and be an active, regular member of CGJA.

The deadline for applying for nomination is August 10, 2006. When confirming that you wish to have your name placed in nomination, we ask that you submit a 100-word biography to the Nominating Committee Chair, Diane O. Masini. Please include in the bio, your activities within the CGJA, including Chapter activities; what standing committee(s) would be of interest to you; and your county and the grand jury year in which you served. Also, please include any professional experiences relative to association activities and your views on what makes an effective board.

Listed below are the members of the Nominating Committee by region. If you wish to have your name placed in nomination, please contact your region member or me, directly. If you wish to nominate a CGJA member for election to the Board of Directors, please confirm with that member that he/she will run if nominated and serve if elected.

NORTH: Tim Colbie, Ph: 530 624-4656, email: <tcoblie@vacation.com>

Diane O. Masini, Ph: 530-272-7690, email: <domasini@sbcglobal.net>

CENTRAL: Bill Bowen, Ph: 415-776-4244, email: <bbowen7@comcast.net >

Owen Haxton Ph: 415-883-3275, email: <hornet5@pacbell.net>

SOUTH: Lew Avera, Ph: 949 388-8910, email: <lewavera@cox.net>

Jennie Forbes Ph: 559-625-0960, email: <forbes_m@sbcglobal.net>

Candidates For Election To The Office Of CGJA Director

SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

by Diane Masini, Chair, CGJA Nominating Committee

The following is intended to provide to those who stand for election to the Board of Directors of CGJA, general information that may be of value to a candidate for the Office of Director, CGJA.

CGJA is a statewide organization incorporated as a nonprofit tax-exempt California corporation. This corporation is governed by a BOD composed of 24 Directors, 12 of whom (four from each of the three regions) are elected each year. The term of office is two years.

A candidate is required to be a member in CGJA in good standing:

- 1) Have been impaneled as a Regular Grand Juror and completed their term of impanelment;
- 2) Have applied to CGJA for membership and been accepted;
- 3) Membership dues for membership year 2006-2007 must be current.

To become a candidate for election to the office of Director: 1) Be nominated by a fellow member in good standing; 2) Be nominated by a CGJA Chapter in good standing; 3) Be suggested for nomination by an Independent Association; 4) Agree to be a candidate and provide a 100-word statement of qualifications to be included with the ballot (the latter is not an absolute requirement)

As a successful candidate elected to the office of Director, you are:

1) Expected to participate in telephonic meetings of the Board of Directors (BOD) unless excused by the President. Regular meetings are currently scheduled on a bi-monthly (six meetings per year) basis. Special meetings of the BOD may also be convened;

2) Expected to serve on one or more Bylaw, Standing and/or Board committees; Committees established in the Corporation Bylaws are: 1. Executive committee, 2.

Nominating committee and 3. Ad Hoc Bylaw committee.

Standing committees identified in CGJA Policies and Procedures Guidelines are: 1.

Finance committee; 2. Legal committee; 3. Membership Relations committee; 4.

Operations committee; 5. Public Relations committee and 6. Training committee.

Board committees described in the Policies and Procedures Guidelines are: 1. Angelo Rolando Memorial Award committee and 2. Audit committee

Additional information is available for review on the web site at <www.cgja.org> Go to Bylaws, Article 6 DIRECTORS for a more detailed description of Director responsibilities.

From the Mailbox

Busy to attend to business

By Clarence Dilts

Editor:

While CGJA president Jerry Lewi and the Board members supportive of his leadership were apparently sufficiently concerned to hold "Special Meetings" re: preparing a response to my opinion letter in the April Journal, they have ignored and violated California Corporation Codes (again). Corporation Code 6321 (a) reads: "Except as provided in subdivision (c), (d), or (f) the Board shall cause an annual report to be sent to the members not later than 120 days after the close of the corporation's fiscal year." The end of CGJA's fiscal year is 31 December. One hundred twenty (120) days thereafter was April 30. There was no financial report to the membership in the April or June Journal nor did I receive such report in the mail.

Lewi and his supporters, having blown a healthy budget surplus, principally on questionable attorney fees, were recently reduced to a point where Lewi offered to use his credit card (I assume CGJA credit card) to pay current bills until anticipated income was realized.

It appears to me that Lewi and his supporters have either willfully or negligently evaded publishing the financial report to the membership to avoid raising questions about the financial stability of the Association -- no small embarrassment -- and their failure to exercise their fiduciary responsibilities.

Additionally, CGJA Policy and Procedure (5.102 (b) reads: "The Finance Committee shall plan and manage the budget preparation process... The process shall be planned and executed to permit a proposed budget to be published in a spring edition of the CGJA Journal.

Perhaps they'll need more "Special Meetings" to compose a response to the questions raised here.

It appears to me that the CGJA not only needs new leadership, it needs appreciable change in Board membership. Elections are not too far off.

Grand Jurors Association of Orange County

By Director and GJAOC member Rose Moreno

CGJA Training at Four Points in Fullerton

In 1999 CGJA initiated a training program for incoming grand jurors in collaboration with the University of La Verne College of Law. One of the prime movers of the event was Audrey Lynberg of West Covina in Los Angeles County. The following years saw the development of the program geographically concentrated in the central and northern parts of the state under the direction of Sherry Chesny of Placer County. Although there have been one-day, one-county sessions provided in the southern region, it was not until this summer that part of the state welcomed the return of a full two-day training seminar along with the return of Audrey Lynberg. Aiding Audrey at the registration table as volunteers at Four Points in Fullerton on July 17 and 18 were Grand Jurors Association of Orange County Directors Hiro Kranz, Joe Moreland, Bob Fauteux and Rose Moreno. Bill Selditz and Bill Turner from the Los Angeles Chapter took the train to Fullerton to help out on Tuesday.

Comments such as, "This is well-organized! The seminar is worth-while. I'm so glad I came." indicated the general sentiments of the participants. Hopefully in response to such reactions CGJA will opt to return yearly with its full training seminar to the southern region.

Ballot Measure To Be Submitted To Membership

When you receive your ballot in September for the annual election of directors, you will see included a separate measure regarding a possible change to our bylaws. The board decided to submit this issue to the membership for a vote, as allowed, and in some cases required, by California law. Please look for this, consider the issue carefully, and return the ballot with your vote for directors.

If you paid your 2005- 06 CGJA dues by August 31, 2006, you are eligible to vote for the election of directors and the ballot measure. Remember that there will likely be more candidates than open seats, so your vote will count.

Juries in the news

Diversity Sought In Grand Juries

Survey Shows More Than Half Don't Reflect The Makeup Of The Counties They Represent.

By Pamela Martineau -- Bee Staff Writer

More than half of the 38 county officials who responded to a California Grand Jurors' Association survey in 2004 said their grand juries did not reflect the demographic makeup of the counties they represented.

"Absolutely it is a problem," said Jerry Lewi, president of the CGJA. "We need representation of the entire community."

Lewi added that the outreach efforts by county officials to find people to serve on grand juries vary throughout California and could use some changes to ensure that people of diverse ethnicities, races, ages and genders are adequately represented on the panels.

The CGJA is a nonprofit association of past and present grand jurors that seeks to improve grand jury service in the state.

The issue of minority representation on grand juries came into the limelight earlier this month when the head of the Yolo County Housing Authority sued in federal court to block the empaneling of this year's Yolo County grand jury on the grounds that the county has systematically excluded Latinos, Asians and other minorities from serving.

David Serena, the embattled former executive director of the YCHA, filed the lawsuit in federal court along with five other Latino employees of the YCHA. They claim their agency, which has been the subject of scathing grand jury reports numerous times in the past decade, is being targeted by grand juries with members who have personal and racial bias against them.

On Monday, U.S. District Judge Frank C. Damrell Jr. asked attorneys on both sides to submit more information on their respective positions. A hearing on procedural issues in the case is scheduled Aug. 4.

Serena resigned Saturday after an independent investigator hired by Yolo County to look into grand jury charges against the YCHA released a report recommending that the county disband the agency's governing board.

The report, authored by retired Placer County Judge Richard L. Gilbert, said most of the Yolo County grand jury's charges against the YCHA are unfounded. The investigator did find, however, that the YCHA improperly used restricted funds to remodel its offices and to acquire property, both in violation of state and federal funding rules.

Gilbert recommended that the Yolo County Board of Supervisors dissolve the housing commission -- the governing board that oversees the agency -- and step in to run the YCHA.

Yolo supervisors will vote on the issue today.

In the meantime, Serena's lawsuit has raised the question of how grand juries select jurors and whether they represent a community's demographics.

The rules governing empaneling grand juries are outlined in the California Penal Code. The rules mandate such things as how much a juror should be paid (\$15 a day) and how many should serve on a grand jury (19), but they say little about how to select jurors.

The rules state that a judge should select the jurors' names randomly from a screened applicant pool, but do not indicate how to assemble the pool, other than to try to obtain jurors from each of a county's five supervisorial districts. Jurors must be county residents, at least 18 years old and U.S. citizens. Convicted felons are ineligible.

The statute empowers grand juries to investigate local government and to bring criminal indictments. In the Sacramento region, grand jury recruitment varies only slightly by county.

Yolo County officials gather an applicant pool by advertising in local newspapers and sending letters to community groups. Jim Perry, court executive officer, said the county tries to obtain a diverse group by soliciting through ethnic groups, such as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Like other counties, the jurors are randomly selected by drawing names from a box.

In Sacramento County, officials send out about 5,000 queries to potential grand jurors, taking names from voter registration rolls and Department of Motor Vehicles records. Sacramento court officials also query community groups and publish a notice in *The Bee*. Some 90 people applied this year, said Pam Reynolds, a spokeswoman for the courts. About 70 of those who applied were eligible and had their names put in a box to be selected randomly, Reynolds said.

In Placer County, officials publish notices and solicit through community groups, but do not use voter rolls and DMV addresses. This year, about 35 people applied, said Yvonne Lewis, business manager for the grand jury.

Two years ago, Solano County officials changed their recruitment procedures, abandoning an old method of having elected officials nominate candidates. Now they solicit through local newspapers Diversity sought in grand juries

and place an application online, said Jamie Harrison, administrative assistant to the grand jury. This year they selected jurors from a pool of about 30 people.

Lewi, from the grand jurors' association, believes that community outreach is the best way to get diverse juries. The Ventura County grand jury, on which he served, recently ran an insert in a local newspaper describing what grand juries do and how to apply. The insert was published in Spanish and English.

Lewi added that many counties use their trial juror rolls to empanel separate criminal grand juries, which district attorneys use to gain a criminal indictment. The method is

used because there have been successful legal challenges to grand jury criminal indictments on the grounds the jury was not ethnically diverse.

Lewi said he knew of no such successful legal challenges for grand juries investigating local government.

New Grand Jury Gets Plenty Of Advice

Editorial San Luis Obispo Tribune

Be thorough, be unbiased, be independent and be reasonable. An effective grand jury is bound to raise some hackles - that comes with being a good watchdog. Grand juries should have the courage to take on tough issues, even at the risk of offending officialdom. As it sets its agenda for the coming year, we urge our newly seated 2006-07 civil grand jury not to shy away from controversial subjects.

At the same time, grand jurors would do well to remember that it takes just a few missteps to taint months of hard work.

A jury that turns out erroneous, superficial or otherwise questionable reports undermines the credibility of all of the dedicated volunteers who spend untold hours poring over records, interviewing witnesses, walking the halls of local government agencies - all for a stipend of \$15 per day.

And once a jury's reputation is tarnished, that makes it that much easier for officialdom to ignore its recommendations, no matter how on target they may be.

Given the demands and the challenges of jury service, we have been fortunate in San Luis Obispo County to have so many individuals willing to volunteer.

The 2005-06 jury was especially productive, turning out 25 separate reports. It took on a number

of diverse and challenging issues: protection of oak trees; citizen advisory councils; racial tensions at Atascadero High; resources for battered women; expenditure of public funds by the Los Osos Community Services District are a few.

That jury is to be commended for shining a light on such important issues that deserve our attention.

We also like the fact that the jury released its reports as soon as they were completed, rather than waiting until the end of the year and releasing them en masse.

That helped ensure the reports got the notice they deserved.

To be sure, not all the reports were well received. A few were criticized for being too general, for containing inaccuracies, for being based on incomplete information and, in some cases, for recommending actions that agencies already had taken. Some of that backlash is to be expected - agencies and individuals

criticized in grand jury reports often fire back, whether the grand jury is in SLO, Sacramento or Santa Barbara County.

But not all the criticisms can be easily dismissed, particularly those surrounding the jury's report on the county Planning Commission. In that case, the jury was accused of shoddy work, of bias, of failing to follow its own guidelines, which require that jurors interview witnesses from all sides of an issue.

We bring this up, not to engage in another round of finger pointing, but to illustrate how vital it is for grand jurors to be scrupulously thorough in their investigations and to avoid even the appearance of bias.

As the training manual for the California Grand Jury Association points out, "A grand jury investigation must not be, or even appear to be, politically or personally motivated."

Our new grand jurors have a challenging year ahead of them. We urge them to approach their task with an open mind, leaving behind preconceived ideas of how government operates, or should operate.

We urge them to conduct thorough and independent investigations, being careful to gather information not just from two sides, but from every side.

We ask that they gather as much local data as possible, rather than relying on statewide reports or generalized studies that may or may not apply to our county.

And finally, we urge them to come up with feasible recommendations that take limited budgets

and other constraints into consideration - not wish lists that don't have a chance of being implemented.

Our grand juries provide an invaluable service. They draw attention to the problems facing some of our most vulnerable citizens. They pointed out some of the shortcomings of our local government agencies. And when credit was due, they praise those agencies and programs that have done a good job.

Grand jurors, past and present, deserve our thanks, our admiration and, most of all, our support in carrying on the work they begin.

Remember, as a watchdog organization, a grand jury can sound the alarm. But it's up to all of us to make sure the alarm is heeded by those in charge.

Specific suggestions for the civil grand jury

- The California Grand Jury Association's training manual has a number of valuable guidelines. Here are some we would like our grand jury to consider:
- Carefully plan investigations, and don't allow them to wander off target.
- Don't tackle too much. "Better to do a few topics in depth than many topics superficially," the manual advises.
- Be skeptical. Don't rely on research done by anyone outside the jury—that includes written complaints submitted to the grand jury, staff reports and yes, newspaper articles.
- Obtain information from at least three sources. While it's helpful to include

information about how other counties or cities operate, try to find counties and cities that are similar to ours.

- Make sure recommendations are "doable," from both a practical and budgetary standpoints. As badly as the county may need a new women's jail, for example, it makes no sense to recommend building one immediately when no money is available.

For more information, visit <www.cgja.org>

Opinions: The views expressed in the Grand Jurors' Journal are those of the writers unless otherwise stated.

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