



## 2020 CGJA Accomplishments

As my report on “the State of the Association” I’d like to now address the highlights of this past years’ accomplishments of the organization. As is very evident, grand juror training continues as the major annual effort on the part of CGJA. The challenging dynamics of the coronavirus pandemic have certainly disrupted California’s 58 counties and impaneling for the 2020/21 grand jury year. In April we formed a pandemic response coordination workgroup spanning our Legal and Legislative Resource Committee and our Training Committee to work directly with the courts in each county to assist them in their planning for how to best conclude the 2019/2020 grand jury activities and to help with guidance on the options available for impaneling the 2020/2021 grand juries. The workgroup consulted with the Judicial Council’s Legal Services Office, the head of the Jury Improvement Project, and fair number of courts to discuss how grand juries can conduct business remotely, what options could be available to finish the current term, and how and when to impanel the grand juries for the 2020/2021 term. After compiling various options to assist the counties, our outreach included the presiding judges’ network, members of the California Judges’ Association, court executive officers, grand jury legal advisors, grand jury liaisons, sitting forepersons and jurors, and CGJA chapters. Our discussions and analysis of state law resulted in a series of communications with the grand juries’ stakeholders along with the use of our website to post a number of guidance documents.

So how did this all turn out ? About fifteen counties were able to impanel by the end of June as normal and CGJA provided training for many of those counties this past summer. Another fourteen or so counties have delayed impaneling until January 2021 and are switching to a calendar year. We are working with them to provide training early next year. Three counties do not expect to impanel a grand jury this term. The remainder delayed impaneling from 3 to 6 months and we are in the midst of their training. Local social distancing requirements are being carefully adhered to which means there will be a mix between in-person and virtual training depending on the available facilities and in concert with local rules. This also means our normal two-day training schedule must be tailored specifically for each county. This certainly stretches the grand jury training to be spread over many months as opposed to the normal July/August timeframe.



I believe if, say in January of this year, I would have approached the training team and proposed we do most of the 2020 training remotely to reduce travel requirements for trainers and grand jurors, most of them would have said “can’t be done.” I would claim that CGJA has the good fortune to have the most resilient, flexible, creative, and committed training team on the planet as exhibited by their ability to pull off the complete restructuring of our training plan during the spread of COVID-19 and be able to meet the varying needs of California’s counties. A new paradigm of training grand jurors year-round, rather than condensed into July and August, is now in place. To train remotely also required revamping of our training program to incorporate slide presentation, interactive sessions, and videos through Zoom as well as indoctrinate our trainers from in-person stand-up to camera and microphone in front of a computer. A truly remarkable accomplishment and so on behalf of the board of directors, CGJA members and grand jurors statewide, I want to thank the Training Committee and more than 20 active trainers along with support personnel for their endeavors to navigate through new territory remaining dedicated to conduct our grand juror training, our Legal Advisor Workshops, and our Foreperson and Pro Tem Workshops effectively and comprehensively. Each year the training team invests heavily in the continual improvement and effectiveness of our training materials and this year is no different in that regard. All-in-all well over 1000 “students” will have participated in our training offerings.

Our **Legal and Legislative Resources Committee** has supported empaneled grand juries, chapter members, legal advisors, and court personnel by responding with best practices to legal questions along with advising them to consult their county’s legal advisor. This past year, the questions have centered on disposal of confidential jury records, and whether the court is required to fill vacancies. LLRC also updated the FAQ page on our website adding new questions and answers and clarifying others. LLRC is also charged with oversight of pending legislation that may affect grand juries and no bills of this nature were introduced this year.

Our **Public Relations Committee** has continued to provide member value through our news blog, Grand Jury News, started in late 2008, and now houses over 4,600 news articles on California civil grand juries – mostly on their reports and published comments about them. The Grand Jurors’ Journal, published 6 times each year continues to provide insightful news about CGJA and its chapters.



I am pleased to report CGJA has approximately 280 voting members, 26 chapters, and 3 affiliated county associations. Our **Membership and Chapter Relations Committee** is working to increase its outreach to recruit new members and keep communications channels to our chapters active.

Our balance sheet is strong with reserves in place to cover unexpected developments and as you might imagine, our 2020 budget has been greatly affected by the pandemic. Our **Finance Committee** reports they expect CGJA to finish the year strong as expenses are trending down matched by delays in predicted income due to our revamped training program.

As you can see, the electronic age has arrived for CGJA, and our recently formed **Technology Committee** has made this event possible by across the board implementation of Zoom for virtual meetings. This committee oversees and supports the technical, data, and communications resources and deploys cohesive technology strategy across the association ensuring the security and privacy of its financial, legal, and membership information.

Although I have not mentioned the many accomplishments of all our committees, their reports have been printed in the October *Grand Jurors' Journal* and are available online on the Annual Conference page on our website, [www.cgja.org](http://www.cgja.org).



## Goals

In 2019, the CGJA Board of Directors adopted a set of strategic and tactical goals for the organization. The top overarching strategic goals are:

- Increase public awareness of the grand jury system with the intent of strengthening the state's civil grand jury applicant pools.
- Establish and maintain a succession planning process for directors and committee chairs, ensuring a continuing talent pool for ongoing governance.
- Develop and implement membership-recruiting programs in order to increase the number of members while delivering increasing membership value.

We continue to embrace these overarching goals and steady progress has been made in 2020.

In closing, I want to again express my appreciation for your attendance and extend a hearty big thank you to Lloyd Bell and the Annual Conference Committee as well as Jim Ragan and the Membership and Chapter Relations Committee whose dedication, hard work, and flexibility in planning today's program is sincerely appreciated.

*Larry Herbst*

2018-2020 CGJA President