

Annual Standing Committee Reports

ANNUAL CONFERENCE (ACC) - strives to present a challenging, inspiring, and informative program each year in a convenient yet popular location that will entice attendees to come early or stay after our meetings to enjoy the locale. **Chair, Lloyd Bell**



Planning for this year's conference began shortly after the conclusion of the 2019 event which was held in Sacramento. Though the program was almost complete in the early spring, the CGJA Board of Directors voted to postpone the event until next year due to Covid-19 pandemic uncertainties.

Next year's Annual Conference (2021) will be held at the Embassy Suites, San Rafael, on October 24-25, 2021, with a full complement of award presentations, informative speakers, an update from the CGJA President, and a gala dinner on the evening of October 24. The committee will continue to monitor the pandemic situation to ensure a safe environment for our meeting.

As required by our bylaws, the Annual Membership Meeting, which is normally held concurrently with the annual conference, will be conducted electronically using Zoom technology, which will enable participants to "attend" this meeting from the comfort of their homes using their computers to participate.

Along with other business that we will conduct, our keynote speaker, Dick Spotswood from the Marin Independent Journal, has entitled his presentation "Credibility: Every grand jury's most valuable asset." We invite you to join us for this very thought-provoking presentation and to participate in this venture, which is a "first" for the CGJA.

Our committee is always seeking new volunteers who wish to volunteer their time and talents in planning and executing our annual conference. If you know of someone who would enjoy working on such an event, or if you would find it fulfilling, please let us know by sending a note to annualconference@cgja.org.



AWARDS (AC) - establishes and administers all CGJA awards and recognition, with the exception of the Lifetime Achievement Award that falls within the purview of the Board of Directors. **Chair, Joann Landi**

This year the CGJA will present **Excellence in Reporting Awards (EIR)** for a grand jury report and media coverage and the **Angelo Rolando Service Award**.

We urge our colleagues to consider presenting awards locally. While certain awards must be presented at the annual meeting, i.e., the EIR and Rolando awards, **Local Achievement** and **Certificates of Special Recognition** awards can be presented at a chapter or regional meeting. This may permit more local

people to be present to enjoy the proceedings and congratulate the honoree(s). Details are on the website at cgja.org/awards.

BYLAWS AND POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE (BPRC) - works with other standing committees and the board of directors to ensure that the association's governing documents are updated as needed, compliant with state law and internally consistent. **Chair, Karen Jahr**

This committee reviews any proposed amendment to the CGJA Bylaws or Policy Manual and makes recommendations regarding the amendment's content, format, and placement within the bylaws or manual. We also review newly adopted or revised committee procedures for consistency with state law, CGJA's Bylaws, and the Policy Manual and report our conclusion to the referring committee. We conduct other reviews as requested.



This past year, BPRC reviewed proposed amendments to the CGJA Bylaws related to directors' terms. We reviewed several proposed amendments to the policy manual, including those related to scheduling and conducting the annual conference and membership meeting, allowing a multi-

county chapter to nominate Excellence in Reporting awards for each member county, allowing for director elections to be held electronically, and requiring an electronic run-off election in the event of a tie vote.

The committee reviewed and provided comments on the revised procedures for the Training Committee, the Nominations-Elections Committee, and the CGJA president. We also reviewed and updated the Chapter Formation Guide.



FINANCE (FC) - works with the president, treasurer, and committee chairs to develop the annual budget and provide oversight of other finance-related information and activities of the association. The committee actively recruits for new members familiar with financial management principles, the nonprofit legal environment, accounting software, and administration. **Chair, Ron Zurek**

This year the Finance Committee:

- Conducted a successful 2019 year-end donation solicitation campaign.
- Conducted a monthly review of CGJA financial records and transactions, including adherence to budget.
- Compiled and facilitated approval of the 2020 CGJA budget.
- Provided timely reminders to chapters concerning their tax-filing obligations.
- Filed IRS CP 119 Form to update subsidiary CGJA chapter nonprofit status.
- Filed updated Entity Numbers for Subordinates to CGJA with the California Franchise Tax Board.
- Successfully managed finance-related issues with the assistance of the CGJA treasurer.
- Updated the Chapter Formation Guide with the latest forms and instructions.
- Forwarded financial information for 2019 to the CPA for preparation of the federal and state tax returns.
- Prepared and submitted an Annual Financial Report for the CGJA Board and membership.

LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE RESOURCES (LLRC) - answers questions submitted by grand juries, grand jurors, CGJA chapter members, legal advisors to grand juries and court personnel. **Chair, Karen Jahr**

Since LLRC members are not in an attorney/client relationship with any grand jury or juror, the committee does not provide legal advice in response to the questions we receive. Instead, we make "best practices" suggestions based on the information submitted to us and on the collective experience of LLRC members. We always advise grand juries and jurors to consult with their legal advisors when they need legal advice about the grand jury or local government entities.



This past year, LLRC or its members provided responses to questions on a number of topics, including whether the court is required to fill vacancies, the propriety of a report urging citizens to contact state officials, making recommendations to a tribe, what constitutes a quorum for conducting grand jury business, how to dispose of confidential materials at the end of the term, the timing of exit interviews, whether responses should be requested for commendatory findings, and the timing for the release of individual reports.

Some of the questions were answered informally by individual LLRC members when the answer could be limited to a referral to the text of the Training Manual or the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page of the association's website.

LLRC's largest project this year was to rewrite the FAQ page. We modified nearly all 60 Q&A entries for clarity and to ensure conformance with the best practice positions reflected in CGJA's training materials. We deleted several entries and substituted new ones that we concluded were of more use to the grand juries.

We updated CGJA's *Compendium of California Grand Jury Law*. We also reviewed and provided comment on the bylaws for the proposed Mendocino Chapter of CGJA.

Another function of the committee is to monitor legislation that could affect the grand jury system and provide an analysis of the bills to the board of directors. No bills related to grand jury operations were introduced this year.



MEMBERSHIP AND CHAPTER RELATIONS (MCRC) - manages the CGJA membership database, recruits and tries to retain CGJA members, shepherds grand jurors in each county who want to form a chapter, supports ongoing chapters, and maintains a membership-resource information database.

In January 2020, the Board of Directors added "chapter" to the name of the committee. This better represents the committee's functions and gives greater recognition to CGJA chapters. **Chair, Jim Ragan**

Voting membership has decreased over the first eight months of 2020: from 279 at the beginning of the year to 270 at the end of August. Membership non-renewals (including deaths) are slightly up over 2019. New members are down, but Introductory Members converting to full members are up. There are four months left in the year. Our target for the end of the year is 285 members.

We welcomed one new chapter, Glenn, in October 2019 (after publication of the 2019 annual report). We currently have 25 chapters representing 27 counties (the Mother Lode represents Amador, Calaveras, and Tuolumne). We continue to help former jurors in other counties form chapters.

A regional meeting of some chapters in the Bay Area was held in June.

In supporting chapters, we have recently assigned each MCRC member to be a liaison to several chapters. to help ensure that:

- we know what chapters are doing so that we can share that information with other chapters and our membership,
- we can broadcast chapter achievements throughout CGJA,
- we can respond promptly to a chapter's request for support from CGJA,
- we can ask for chapter support to CGJA and the statewide issues we deal with – when they come up,
- we can remind chapters when their reports and filings to IRS and state agencies are due, and

We have modified our Chapter Resource Documents page on our website to make it easier to find documents.

We are working on an article for the February 2021 edition of the *Grand Jurors' Journal* that will recognize our lifetime members and those who have been CGJA members for at least five years. This will then become an annual article.

PUBLIC RELATIONS (PRC) - continues to present timely information about CGJA and the California civil grand jury system to our members, our chapters, sitting grand jurors, and interested others. **Chair, Jim Ragan**
Website



In January 2020, the Board of Directors moved the responsibility for the website from PRC to the relatively new Technology Committee (Tech). This reflects today's reality that virtually all standing committees use and post information on the website. The move was, therefore, to place the responsibility where it best fits within CGJA. When the website was launched, the board would probably have assigned it to Tech if it had existed. To help ensure coordination between PRC and Tech, the webmaster continues as a PRC member and makes monthly reports.

Grand Jury News

PRC continues to manage our news blog, *Grand Jury News*, on the website. It now houses over 4,600 news and opinion articles on California civil grand juries since late 2008 – mostly on their reports and published comments about them. We organize the posted articles chronologically grouped by year (starting with the most recent article). A search capability on the blog page enables the user to search for articles based on key words such as a county, a report topic, a media source, and an author.

The Grand Jurors' Journal

The bimonthly *Grand Jurors' Journal* continues as a vibrant information vehicle to reach our members, current grand jurors, and court and county staffs. Barbara Sommer, our editor, continues to produce first-class editions. In each journal, one can find CGJA announcements, chapter news, training information, and other interest topics to readers. Our website contains Journal Archives that go back to 2001 (and even a few issues before that).

While we continue to mail a hard copy of the journal to those requesting it, the vast majority receive and read it electronically. One of the great advantages of this is that it enables us to provide electronic links where readers can find more information.

CGJA News and Juror Messages

This is a support-function for PRC. We continue to support the president and committee chairs in electronically sending messages to members and others under two conditions. The first is when the messages cannot wait for the next edition of the journal. The second is when the messages are so important that they require emphasis outside the journal. 2020 is the year that CGJA used (and continues to use) this PRC function to keep everyone informed about how grand juries, courts, chapters, and CGJA (especially in training) are addressing the COVID-19 crisis.

Social Media

Our connections are Facebook and Twitter. If you follow us on either, you will receive a notice and link whenever we post an article on our news blog. We know that we are not using social media to full benefit. We seek a member(s) to join PRC who are experienced with using social media and have the desire and time to take on this function.



TECHNOLOGY (Tech) – oversees and supports the technical, data, and communications resources and deploys a cohesive technology strategy across the association ensuring the security and privacy of its financial, legal, and membership information. **Chair, Lou Panetta**

The Technology Committee took on two major development projects this year.

A new custom search engine was developed to support the more focused searching of grand jury reports throughout all 58 California counties. The new search capabilities will find reports and agency responses, by topic, for

as many years as the various counties archive on their websites. This is an important tool for sitting grand juries.

Two Zoom accounts were established. One is dedicated to the monthly board meeting and all of the various recurring committee meetings. This replaces the WebEx account previously used. The second account is dedicated to CGJA Training, as most of our training during the pandemic is done remotely. Significant work was required for curriculum conversion and developing trainer skills for remote training.

In addition, the Technology Committee performed regular support for the association's website and the archival storage and access of the association's records in Dropbox.



TRAINING (TC) – develops and conducts annual training programs presented at statewide locations for new grand jurors. **Chair, Marsha Caranci**

CGJA's training year started off as it normally does – we reviewed the comments from last year's trainees and our own evaluations and updated our curriculum; we interviewed and selected a group of new trainers and planned our annual "Train-the-Trainer" face-to-face meeting in Sacramento for early April; we contacted all of the 58 counties to offer and schedule our annual two-day summer training seminars; and we scheduled four Foreperson and Pro Tem Workshops, two Legal Advisor Workshops, and seven fall Report Writing Workshops – all in regional locations.

By March, we were well positioned for another great year. Then the whole world turned upside down, requiring us to regroup. We immediately cancelled our train-the-trainer workshop and rescheduled it as a series of sessions on Zoom.

CGJA formed a Pandemic Response Workgroup who, together with our Training Committee and the Legal and Legislative Resources Committee, explored the possible alternatives for how courts might deal with extending the 2019-2020 grand jury term if needed, or delaying impaneling the new grand jury if a normal schedule wasn't possible due to the pandemic. (See more on the work of this group in their separate report which follows.)

We contacted the courts and grand juries throughout the state and learned that counties were taking different approaches. Some juries were able to finish their term on the normal schedule and the courts could impanel a new jury on time; other courts extended the term of the sitting jury by up to six months; others determined they would ask their board of supervisors to approve changing to a calendar-year term; and many delayed making any decision until they knew better how the situation would evolve.

We quickly realized that new juries would be seated anywhere from the normal July 1 date all the way to January 2021. We cancelled most of our previously planned seminars and workshops and adopted an ad-hoc approach to our training schedule. We also found that as situations changed, which has been almost daily, there was little certainty about whether in person or remote training would be the best alternative. We were asked to provide our first in-person training in late June, another in early July, and yet another in early August. But most counties realized that training remotely would be the only practical and safe solution for juries who were being impaneled this summer and fall.

We set up our licensed Zoom account and learned how to use it; we studied YouTube videos and had a number of Zoom training sessions for some of the veteran trainers who had the technological capabilities to train remotely, and then started bringing on additional members of the training team. We had our first fully remote training session on Zoom the second week in August and have been conducting these sessions weekly since.

Like the rest of the world, we quickly adapted to the Zoom approach to training and have learned how to share our interview videos, conduct interactive sessions using breakout rooms, and make the best of the experience – all while teaching new jurors from the safety and comfort of our own homes. But it has been a lot of work, and we appreciate the efforts and time that all members of our training team have put into this.

As of press time for this report, we will have trained three grand juries in person and sixteen via Zoom, and will have conducted two Foreperson and Pro Tem Workshops on Zoom. We have several additional remote training seminars scheduled for this fall, one in-person training, one more Foreperson and Pro Tem Workshop, two Legal Advisor Workshops, and a number of Report Writing Workshops. And then we will start again in January, providing training either in-person or remotely to all of those grand juries that will be impaneled in December or January, another Foreperson and Pro Tem Workshop, and many more Report Writing Workshops – all to accommodate the various impanelment dates. What a strange year!

In the meantime, grand juries are developing their own approaches to meeting remotely if needed, conducting investigations and interviews that way, and getting their work done (even if their term is shortened). We are here to help – we have added helpful hints to our training programs on how to deal with these challenges and have provided additional information on the CGJA website.

We are impressed with how everyone involved with the grand jury system has dealt with the challenges they face, and how the courts have come up with some creative ways to meet their constitutional mandate to impanel a grand jury every year – even during a pandemic. We hope for and look forward to returning to some semblance of “normal” in 2021.

I want to thank all of our trainers and support volunteers for their dedication to our effort to provide training to California’s civil grand juries. And I would like to express our sorrow in having lost two colleagues this past year who played an important part in the development of the CGJA training program: Sherry Chesny, the founder of the program, who passed away last November after a long and difficult time with Alzheimer’s; and Ron Miguel, who was with Sherry at the outset and who contributed to our program right up to within weeks of his passing in June after a short illness. They will be missed.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE COORDINATION WORKGROUP, Co-chairs, Karen Jahr and Marsha Caranci

In early March, several of us active in CGJA began discussing the possible effects of COVID-19 social-distancing guidelines on grand jury operations and the courts’ ability to recruit applicants for the 2020/2021 term.

Soon, superior courts and grand juries were turning to CGJA for best-practice advice about these issues. We began collecting as much information as possible about what the courts were doing about the duration of the 2019/2020 grand jury’s term and their recruitment efforts for the next term so that we could act as a clearinghouse for this information.

On March 29, CGJA President Larry Herbst appointed the Pandemic Response Coordination Workgroup to coordinate the association’s responses to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The workgroup contacted the Judicial Council’s Legal Services Office and the head of the Jury Improvement Project to discuss with them how grand juries can conduct business remotely, whether and how the current juries’ terms could be extended, and how and when to recruit and impanel the 2020/2021 grand jury. Our communications with the courts were posted on the presiding judges’ own network and distributed to the members of the California Judges’ Association. We also contacted court executive officers, grand jury legal advisors, grand jury liaisons, sitting forepersons and jurors, and CGJA chapters to let them know what steps we were taking and to invite their input.

Our discussions and analysis of state law resulted in a series of communications with the grand juries’ stakeholders and culminated with the CGJA website posting and email distribution of our most recent document, “[Coping With COVID](#).”

This document provides our best practice advice regarding extended-term and shortened-term grand juries, how juries can effectively hold plenary and committee meetings and conduct interviews, how they can inquire into detention facilities as required by PC §919 if facility tours are unavailable, how to remotely write and edit reports, and how jurors can communicate with each other and establish a collegial team. The webpage also contains most of the earlier communications prepared by the workgroup.