

# 2025 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. This year, we hope you enjoy the scenic beauty of San Luis Obispo! **Chair, Lloyd Bell**



After each conference our committee reviews feedback from the attendees to tailor the following year's conference with material that our members find interesting and useful. Returning this year are the interactive learning sessions geared to providing information that can be used to enhance local programs as well as giving seated jurors an

opportunity to learn more about the inner workings of our organization.

This year, as we gather in San Luis Obispo, we look forward to hearing from Professor Foad Khosmood who will enlighten us on the topic of Artificial Intelligence and how it can apply to our grand jury and association activities, as well as being personally useful in our everyday lives.

We also look forward once again to gathering to celebrate local successes and renewing acquaintances, along with a full complement of award presentations, an informative panel discussion, an update from the CGJA President, and a gala dinner and silent auction on the evening of October 27. You will also not want to miss the live auction at the end of the evening.

Our committee is growing, and we are always seeking new volunteers who wish to give of their time and talents in planning and executing our annual conference. If you would find it interesting to work on such an event, or know of someone who would, please let us know by sending a note to me at [annualconference@cgja.org](mailto: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**

The committee oversees the following CGJA awards: Lifetime Achievement Award, Angelo Rolando Service Award, Best Grand Jury Report, Best Media Coverage, and Certificates of Special Recognition.



This year we presented awards for the Best Grand Jury Report and the Angelo Rolando Service Award. Certificates of Special Recognition 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).

For more information about these awards, see the website, [cgja.org/awards](http://cgja.org/awards).

## BYLAWS AND POLICY REVIEW (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, Larry Herbst**



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.

CGJA's governing documents remained stable throughout this past year; the current Articles of Incorporation were most recently updated in May 2024, the CGJA Bylaws in March of 2024, and the Policy Manual in September of 2024.

BPRC's focus during 2025 has been to work with CGJA's chapters to assist, review, and approve their updated Chapter Bylaws as requested by the Membership and Chapter Relations committee to support CGJA's name change to Civil Grand Jurors' Association of California with similar formal name changes to further strengthen and communicate to the public, the civil aspect of our statewide mission.

We also review newly adopted or revised committee procedures and conduct other reviews as requested.

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## Standing committee reports - continued

### FINANCE (FC)

Works with the CGJA president, treasurer and committee chairs to develop the annual budget, provide monthly review of CGJA financial reports (balance sheet, income statements, cash flow), bank statements and transaction details. **Chair, Dan ‘Don’ Freeman**



The Committee is actively seeking new members knowledgeable in one or more subjects: accounting, finance, QuickBooks Enterprise (“QBE” accounting software) and nonprofit organizations. Please reach out to me if you are interested.

This past year, we continued investing in U.S. Treasuries and implemented a new accounting system that brings us in conformance with generally accepted accounting principles. Additionally, we

- compiled, reviewed and facilitated the approval of the 2025 Budget.
- changed from cash to the accrual basis of accounting.
- moved to a hosted accounting system to improve access and security.
- documented QuickBooks accounting procedures.
- improved processes and automation of revenue collection and out-of-pocket expenses.
- enhanced the financial reports to the board, FC and committee chairs.
- are refreshing the documentation of FC oversight responsibilities.
- are establishing an investment sub committee.



### LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE RESOURCES (LLRC)

Comprised of active and retired members of the California State Bar and answers questions submitted by grand juries, individual grand jurors, CGJA chapter members, legal advisors to grand juries, and court personnel. **Chair, Karen Jahr**



Because the members of LLRC are not in an attorney/client relationship with any jury or individual who contacts us, the committee does not provide legal advice in response to their questions. Instead, we make best practice suggestions based on the information submitted to us and on the collective experience of the members of LLRC. We always inform grand juries and jurors that they should consult with their legal advisors when they need legal advice about the grand jury or local governmental entities.

Most of the questions posed to us are answered informally by individual committee members by referencing CGJA's training materials or website. This year, individual LLRC members or the full committee answered questions related to such issues as records retention, the grand jury's access to an entity's personnel records, subpoenas for records, the scope of a legal advisor's review of draft reports, if a governing board may consider its response to a grand jury report in closed session, and whether the jury can forward complaints to other oversight bodies.

LLRC has three other routine functions. We annually update CGJA's Compendium of California Law, a publication for grand jury legal advisors that reprints the annotated statutes related to the jury's watchdog function. Each year, we update the *Frequently Asked Questions* page on CGJA's website. And we monitor legislation that could affect the grand jury system and provide an analysis of the bills to the CGJA Board of Directors; in the past year, no legislation was introduced that would affect the grand jury.

This year, we also prepared a proposed request to the California Attorney General (AG) for a formal opinion regarding whether the grand jury has the duty to inquire into state-operated correctional facilities. LLRC is looking for a sponsor to submit our opinion request to the AG.

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## Standing committee reports - continued

### MEMBER AND CHAPTER RELATIONS (MCRC)

Responsible for the recruitment and retention of CGJA members, fostering growth of the organization, and supporting CGJA chapters. Chair, Michael Hofman



Our goal this past year has been to grow our committee's active membership to move forward with a series of initiatives. Now with a strong team (14 members) and effective subcommittees we are moving forward in the areas of assisting new chapters, existing chapter

support, CGJA member management and CGJA volunteer management. These initiatives have resulted in

- stabilizing the CGJA membership renewal program through consistent renewal marketing efforts, messaging and effective use of Constant Contact (with the great assistance of the Public Relations Committee). This work has resulted in 341 members at the end of August, compared to 289 at the end of August 2024.
- attracting a strong increase of new members from current jurors, due to the strength of the training programs and professionalism of our messaging. At the end of August, we have had 41 members join who were recent jurors, as opposed to 7 joining at the end of August 2024! We believe that the professionalism of the training to jurors and the communication program both contribute to this success.
- improving relationships with existing CGJA chapters (now 22 active chapters), through continuing chapter officers' meetings on a three-times a year regular schedule and establishing regular lines of communication through the Chapter Relations subcommittee (6 members) and its chair Sharon DeBenedetti.
- helping new and reconstituted chapters as they develop through the efforts of the Chapter Formation subcommittee and its chair Shirley Boracci.
- initiating a collaborative membership renewal

program, offering chapters the opportunity to gain new members and receive chapter dues during the CGJA fall membership drive.

- initiating a program to show off the value and importance of CGJA's member volunteers, without which our organization wouldn't exist.

We look forward to continuing and expanding these efforts over the next year, continuing to develop the "win-win-win" approach with CGJA, its chapters and CGJA members!

### PUBLIC RELATIONS (PRC)

Has taken an aggressive role at building awareness of the grand jury system through communications with our members, chapters, and the media. The use of social media to communicate grand jury work has increased substantially. Chair, John Bradley

To paraphrase William Shakespeare, 'What's in a number?'



Well, if that number happens to be 37,313 – and you also happen to be a volunteer member of the Public Relations Committee – the answer is a whole lot! That's because 37,313 is the number of individual 'E-Blast' email messages which the committee sent out during the past year to ensure that all CGJA members, leadership, committees, chapter members, sitting jurors, court personnel, jury legal advisors, and annual conference attendees were consistently well-informed. That number is also 3½ times larger than the total number of email messages sent out during any previous year.

That count, along with the following key numbers, says much about how busy the PRC continues to be in support of the association:

(6) The number of timely and thought-provoking, scheduled issues published of the **CGJA Journal**, carefully written and compiled with incomparable excellence by our editor, Barbara Sommer.

(68) The number of **county news media articles** – detailing civil grand juries and their positive local impacts – gathered and reported for posting on the **CGJA Facebook page** by the PRC's 'reporters.'

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## Standing committee reports - continued

(6) The number of chapters (El Dorado, Fresno, San Mateo, Solano, Humboldt and Contra Costa) who applied – and whose requests were processed and granted formal approval by the committee – **to utilize the official CGJA logo** in conjunction with specific chapter uses, as part of the PRC's chartered responsibility to oversee and protect the association's branding integrity.

(60) The number of team-brainstormed, **new 'public outreach' vehicles and concepts**, which were then ranked and documented to create a living 'idea bank' from which the committee can draw in choosing future projects.

Continuing the committee's mission, in the past year the team also

- Produced a compact and convenient public outreach **'Talking Points' document** sheet, tailored to use in all counties and circumstances, with highlights to utilize in all public speaking opportunities.
- Created and executed a new, six-part online **2025 Annual Conference publicity campaign**.
- Performed the annual update of the committee's **Procedures** document.
- Worked with county court officials to publicize the annual **'Grand Jury Awareness Month' message and activities throughout the State**.

But the numbers above don't tell the entire story, because a number can't fully capture the drive, creativity, enthusiasm and just plain hard work that the members of the PRC display, week-in and week-out. Or of the great times that we have in doing all this together!

So, 'What's in a number?' The answer is: a lot of accomplishment – and a lot for this team to be proud of. And I suspect that even Stratford-upon-Avon's most famous resident would agree!

### TECHNOLOGY (Tech)

Oversees and supports the technical, data, and communications resources of the association. It deploys a cohesive technology strategy across the association ensuring the security and privacy of its financial, legal, and membership information. **Chair, Lou Panetta**



The committee manages the website, *cgja.org*. Most financial transactions made with CGJA are conducted through the website, including conference and class registrations. Board elections are recorded through *cgja.org*. The website also serves as an enormous resource for sitting grand juries with a myriad of management tools for producing excellent investigations and final reports.

During this past year, the committee supported and maintained DropBox, the cloud storage application that securely stores the association's records; three Zoom accounts used for training, committee meetings, and board meetings; and the CGJA website, *cgja.org*.

An important, ongoing responsibility for the committee is the support of the Stripe System for credit card processing. The association's credit card processor enables a manageable accounting process that integrates with the recently implemented QuickBooks Enterprise Accounting System.

In addition, a collaborative cloud application system was developed for the training committee to provide a streamlined process of tracking the scheduling of training sessions and distribution of manuals to over 50 California counties.

### TRAINING (TC)

Develops and conducts annual training programs for grand jurors throughout the state. **Co-chairs, Marsha Caranci and Richard Rogers**

Training is one of CGJA's most important functions – our organization and our chapters are only as strong as the civil grand juries we support through outreach and education, and particularly through the intensive training provided by no other source in California.

Over 85% of CGJA's annual budget consists of income derived from training fees and expenses



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## Standing committee reports - continued



incurred to provide professional and high-quality training to almost all of California's 58 counties.

CGJA's training program is the driving force behind the most effective civil grand jury system in the United States. We supply the knowledge, guidance, methodology, and

best practices that make civil grand juries competent and impactful. Through our materials, individual training for each grand jury, and CGJA's website, we provide the juries with the tools they need to do their job.

CGJA Training recently completed another very successful summer training season for the new and returning grand jurors and alternates impaneled for the fiscal year. We are currently presenting our third day of training, the Report Writing Workshop, which began in mid-October and will run through January. We will also train the two counties who remain on a calendar-year term in January.

In 2025, we trained over 1100 grand jurors and alternates from 54 counties during our two-day seminars, over 100 forepersons and pro tems at our six Foreperson and Pro Tem Workshops, and about 30 legal advisors at our Legal Advisor Workshops. We anticipate training over 800 jurors at our Report Writing Workshops this year.

We also held two Foreperson Roundtable sessions on Zoom last year and will do so again in 2026.

CGJA's Program and Administration Subcommittee has a number of hard-working volunteers who coordinate the support for these seminars and workshops. This includes scheduling the venues, handling workshop registrations, making hotel reservations for the training teams, arranging for the delivery of materials and equipment, and more.

The Curriculum Subcommittee reviews and revises the training materials for all the seminars and workshops every year and oversees getting all materials printed. We have two scenarios that we use as examples of investigative procedures, with two videos for each scenario – one of an interview of a department head at the beginning of an investigation, which we show during our initial training, and one of an exit interview that we show

during our Report Writing Workshop, with the same department head being interviewed again just before the report is released.

Our Trainer Subcommittee handles vetting and selecting potential trainers as needs arise. They review applications, conduct interviews, and spend hours mentoring the new trainers. In 2025, we successfully recruited ten new trainers who were approved by the Training Committee and participated in our 2025 summer training season. Our full roster of CGJA trainers is included as part of the volunteer list produced in the Annual Conference Program. Our training team now represents 24 of the 58 counties, giving us a broad statewide perspective.

The Trainer Subcommittee also conducts our New Trainer Orientation and Train-the-Trainer programs, which are held annually in Sacramento over three days in May. This is the only time our full training staff is together in one place, providing an opportunity to share ideas to improve our programs and giving our newer trainers the knowledge and skills needed to be effective CGJA trainers.

Our Finance Subcommittee monitors our income and expenses. Our Technology Subcommittee maintains our computers and audio and video equipment, as well as our Zoom accounts. And our Public Relations Subcommittee keeps the jurors and CGJA members informed by assisting with the monthly communications that go out from the training team, either through Eblasts or the *Journal*.

A big thanks to all our talented and hard-working trainers and support volunteers for their dedication to CGJA's important mission of providing training to California's civil grand juries, and to the CGJA members and chapters who support our efforts.

