**Grand Jury Press Releases**

Civil grand juries depend upon news media to get the widest distribution of their investigative reports. Every grand jury can and should craft press releases that will inform the public of its investigations, encourage citizens to bring concerns before the grand jury for possible review, and interest citizens in grand jury service.

**Format and style:**

* **Headline –** Summarize in one line of 14-point type (Helvetica, Calibri, or other sans-serif font), boldface and centered.
* **Text –** Use 12-point Times New Roman, Georgia, or other serif font, flush left.
* **Style –** The Associated Press Stylebook (a digital version costs $30/year) is widely accepted by media on grammar, punctuation, capitalization etc.

**Press release tips:**

* Keep it short (1 typewritten page max), but with plenty of substance.
* Do not include any confidential information that is not in the report itself.
* Remember that you are writing for two audiences: media and the public.
* Include Grand Jury in the headline and focus on a single or overall finding.
* Capitalize “Grand Jury” throughout.
* Try to make the headline and lead paragraph attention-grabbers.
* Include a date for the press release.
* Quote often from the report to get as much as possible out there unfiltered.
* Introduce the name of the report early.
* Include where the media or public can access the report.
* Briefly explain what a civil grand jury is and what role it plays.
* Explain, preferably in direct quotation, why the Grand Jury investigated.
* Summarize findings and recommendations succinctly. It’s not necessary to include all of them.
* Including information about response due dates reminds media to follow-up.
* Whenever possible include a photo.
* Include the foreperson’s Grand Jury email for media contact. (Don’t provide the foreperson’s private email or phone number, lest it be widely publicized.)
* Use each release to solicit citizen requests for investigations and to recruit grand jurors.

**General suggestions:**

* Have the draft press release edited by another juror or committee appointed to do this work.
* Have your press release ready when the report is posted.
* Work with your county or court public information officer (PIO) on distribution.
* Writing a press release yourself and giving it to the PIO, helps ensure it includes what you want and not someone else’s rewrite.
* Do not give the press release to the PIO in advance to preserve confidentiality.
* The foreperson or designee should work with the PIO on all press releases.
* Consider having the PIO address the entire Grand Jury as part of the early orientation process.

***Sample press release:***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Grand Jury Concludes Garfield Road Repair Program Needs Fixing**

(May 20, 2023)

After a seven-month investigation, the 2022-2023 Garfield County Grand Jury concluded that “the City of Garfield road repair program is unable to serve the community’s basic needs because of a combination of fiscal, administrative, and political issues.”

The report, “Many Bumps in Garfield’s Road Repair Program,” was published today at GJreports@jeffcocourts.us.ca.gov by the Superior Court, which annually appoints 19 county residents as grand jurors to serve as citizen watchdogs over local government.

The Grand Jury review was initiated by “citizen complaints about crumbling roads and a lack of city response in some parts of Garfield, while road repairs were made near the homes of well-connected people.”

Among the Grand Jury’s findings:

* The Garfield City Council frequently “has not allocated as much road repair money as requested by the Garfield Public Works Department” and some funds authorized for roadwork “were diverted to other city needs or went unspent.”
* “There is no long-term, sustainable schedule of road repairs.”
* The department missed opportunities to cut material and equipment costs.
* “There are no policies about responding to or tracking citizen complaints about road conditions.”
* Privately maintained streets in Garfield were repaired more frequently than those maintained by the city.

The Grand Jury recommends that within six months, the city develop a sustainable, well-funded street-repair program that includes written policies for responding equitably to all residents’ concerns and for saving costs of material and equipment.

Under California law, the Garfield City Council must respond to the Grand Jury report within 90 days.

The Garfield County Grand Jury encourages the public to share concerns about county, municipal, school, and special-district operations at citizenalert@jeffcograndjury.com.

The Superior Court lists qualifications for Grand Jury service and encourages applications at [GJinterest@jeffcocourts.us.ca.gov](mailto:GJinterest@jeffcocourts.us.ca.gov).

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