



CGJA Journal

Vol. 26, No. 2, April 2025



Nominate a fellow member, or yourself, for the **Board of Directors** to oversee the operations of CGJA. Two new members are elected each year from each region for a term of two years to make a total of twelve on the board (four members from each region). Board members may serve three consecutive two-year terms.

The term of office is November 1 to October 31. You have direct input in how CGJA carries out its mission to promote, preserve and support the grand jury system. This is accomplished through training, education, and outreach in our communities. It can be a rewarding experience. [Read more.](#)

Ask the Trainers by the Training Committee Co-chairs



Marsha Caranci

This regular column allows the CGJA training team to share with Journal readers our responses to questions we receive from grand jurors. Please remember: Do not take any responses as legal advice and contact your local legal advisors to answer any question that might divulge confidential information.

Please submit your questions to us at cgjatraining@cgja.org. Our response to your edited or redacted question might appear in a future edition of the Journal.

Questions

Our grand jury is struggling with writing our findings. What suggestions do you have?

Our jury is confused on who we can require to respond to our reports and who should be listed in the "Invited Responses" section. Can you clarify this for us?

When establishing timelines for releasing our reports, how much time should we include for exit interviews?

[Read the answers.](#)



Richard Rogers

Why I Volunteer



If we're lucky – *truly lucky* – life's 'Third Acts' can bring a kind of fulfillment and satisfaction that we can only dream about during those earlier, hectic years.

That's certainly the case for Lloyd Bell, who's used that time to discover both CGJA and his own love for volunteering...but only *after* having had not one but *two* prior careers!

[Read more](#) about Lloyd.

February Multi-Chapter Meeting Highlights

Does your chapter need to make a change because of the CGJA's name change, i.e., Civil Grand Jurors' Association of California? Fear not. Procedural directions are soon coming, per Vice-president Larry Herbst.

Be sure to follow the "Ask the Trainer" column in the *Journal*. Great way to keep up to date on legal and other changes.

Get the new CGJA logo for use by your chapter. Let us know the format desired and use to which it will be put. We need to approve its use, but the turnaround will be quick. Contact John Bradley, Public Relations Committee chair at publicrelations@cgja.org.

We need help on our committee! Please direct any interested chapter members to our [volunteer page](#).

Keep us informed of chapter contacts. Send the [Membership and Chapter Relations Committee](#) a couple of contact names (and email) in addition to the current president.

Lots of good information exchanged about grand jury recruitment practices. Too much to summarize here.

Attendees: Thirty-six people, 17 chapters represented.

The multi-chapter meeting is for chapter presidents to discuss mutual interests. The next multi-chapter meeting is **June 11 at 3 pm**. If you would like to join, please ask your chapter president to check if there is available space for you.

Award Nominations *Recognition*

Nominations are open through June 30 for CGJA's annual Excellence in Reporting awards for **Best Grand Jury Report** and **Best Media Coverage**.

CGJA chapters and members are encouraged to submit nominations for important, effective reports issued in 2020 or after and to recommend examples of outstanding media coverage of reports or the civil grand jury in general. [Read more](#).

CGJA's Panetta at JEM (Court Personnel)



Last month, Director Lou Panetta spoke at the **Jury Education & Management (JEM)** conference. The organization aims to improve jury operations through the exchange of ideas and information, along with education and technical assistance to jury service personnel. Members are Jury Commissioners, Administrators, Managers, Clerks and other court personnel involved in jury management.

CGJA President Gary Cooper accompanied Panetta to the conference. Read [Cooper's account](#).



Sign up. Use your gifts.

Join a CGJA committee

As with any organization that is vibrant and growing, CGJA has staffing needs within our widely varying committees to work to actively promote, preserve, and support the grand jury system across California.

Please review the committee descriptions along with their staffing needs. If you have the skills, interest, and some time to get involved, please contact the committee chairs listed.

Note: No travel is required except where noted. See [committee list](#).

LA Civil Grand Juror Loses Home in Altadena Fire



Dale La Casella served on six committees for the Los Angeles 2022-23 Civil Grand Jury and chaired the Speakers and Tours committee.

Along with two other CGJ jurors she and her husband lost their home and all possessions to the fires of January 7-8, 2025.

Read the [full account](#).



Alameda

The Alameda Chapter hosted a regional gathering (also on Zoom) on February 18. The meeting opened with a presentation of the chapter's use of *WordPress* for web construction and maintenance. Next was an extended discussion on desired methodology along with guidelines and best practice for addressing report responses. Pizza was distributed to grateful attendees! - from **Scott Law**, Chapter President



Beginning on the right foreground: **Andrea Lovette**, **Janet Clark**, **Sandy McCabe**, (not visible), **Paul Sullivan**, Alameda; **Michael Hofman**, San Francisco; **Bob Finlayson**, **Deborah Wiener**, **Charles Cerjan**, **Joann Land**, Contra Costa; **Janeko Bower**, Marin; and **Elaine Kelly**, Solano.

Contra Costa

As part of Grand Jury Appreciation Month, on February 25, CGJA and chapter members **Bob Finlayson** and **Charles Cerjan** described, for the board of supervisors, the broad support supplied by the CGJA to the sitting jury through its training programs, report writing workshops, and volunteer clerk programs.



Photo: Supervisor Candace Andersen (right) presenting the Board's commendation to the current protem. The foreperson is behind her to the left flanked by current jury and chapter members. [Read more.](#)

El Dorado

The **El Dorado County Chapter** set up a display outside the County Board of Supervisors meeting room in the main lobby of the building. It shows the first published grand jury report from 1854, current grand jury reports, requirements to apply, and statistics showing that 74% of recommendations from the last five years resulted in action. They added a QR code that can be scanned for more information.



Secretary **Mary Chan** and Treasurer **Gina Posey** of the **El Dorado County Chapter**

Madera



The Madera County Board of Supervisors presents the Grand Jury Month proclamation to members of the civil grand jury.

Placer

On February 4th, 2025, in Auburn, the Placer County Board of Supervisors proclaimed Civil Grand Jury Awareness Month. Members of the current 2024-2025 Placer Grand Jury were present along with two members of the **Placer County Grand Jurors' Association, Carol and Al Witten**, shown below on the far right.



San Joaquin

On February 11th, the San Joaquin County Board of Supervisors presented the San Joaquin Chapter and the sitting grand jury with a Certificate of Appreciation. Shown below are CGJA members, **Gary Cooper** and **Mary Kennedy-Bracken**, accepting the certificate.



San Luis Obispo

San Luis Obispo County Chapter members went before their Board of Supervisors on February 25 to recognize Civil Grand Jury Awareness month. Chapter President, **Nancy Welts**, is shown below holding the proclamation, flanked by current and former grand jurors with county supervisors in the back row.



She's a Star!

CGJA trainer, **Lori Macdonald** (Ventura County) was featured in **Channel**, Winter 2024-25, Vol. 29, No. 1 Biannual, published by California State University Channel Islands.

[Read the article.](#)



new MEMBERS

Name	County
Lorena Tournour	Mendocino
Jesse Hernandez	Monterey
Leslie Lambert	Santa Clara

Recent Board Actions - [click here](#)

See CGJA's 2024 *Financial Statements*

Keep us Posted

Format articles in Word and send as email attachments to Barbara Sommer, editor@cgja.org. For more details see [How to submit an article](#).

DEADLINE for submitting media for publication in the next issue.

May 26, 2025

Please [update](#) your contact information (if needed).

Join/Renew your membership

Serve on a committee - see the [committee descriptions](#).

The mission of the CGJA is to promote, preserve, and support the grand jury system through training, education, and outreach.

Contacts: [Officers and directors](#), chapter and association [presidents](#).

STAY CONNECTED



[Visit our website](#)

The views expressed in the *CGJA Journal* are those of the writers unless otherwise stated. The CGJA Board of Directors disclaims any liability arising from errors or omissions. The Editor has the right to accept, edit, or reject submitted articles.

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Civil Grand Jurors' Association of California | 1017 L Street # 320 | Sacramento, CA 95814 US

The board establishes management-related policies, makes decisions on major issues and generally oversees the association's activities. These actions are carried out through CGJA's standing committees.

Requirements

1. Directors must be voting members of CGJA on July 31 of the election year, and throughout their two-year term.
2. Directors must reside in the region they represent.

It is desirable for directors to have some experience with CGJA chapters or committees.

Are you interested? See *Board Member Duties* below. Also, the [CGJA website](#) has much information. Using the pull-down menu, **About CGJA**, go to **Board Information** where you will see links to the current agenda and past minutes.

Board meetings are held via Zoom and/or telephone on the fourth Tuesday of every month at 3 p.m. You are invited to attend.

Nominations are now open. Send an email message to nominations@cgja.org

Timeline for 2025 nominations, voting and reporting:

May 31 – nominations and candidate interviews close

June 15 – candidate statement deadline (for inclusion in the August edition of the Journal).

June 24 – ballots submitted to the board

July 31 – membership closes for eligibility to vote

August 15 – voting begins

September 15 – voting ends

September 30 – ballots counted by Tellers Committee and reported to CGJA President and candidates

October 26 – Results announced at Annual Conference and in October *Journal*.

Contact NEC members (nominations@cgja.org) for more information regarding the nomination and election process.

Board member duties: It shall be the duty of the directors to: (a) Perform any and all duties imposed on them collectively or individually by law, or pursuant to these bylaws and the board's adopted policies (b) Assume fiduciary responsibility for the corporation as required by law (c) Prescribe the duties and fix the compensation (if any) of all officers, agents, and employees of the corporation, except as otherwise provided in these bylaws (d) Supervise all officers, agents, and employees of the corporation to assure that their duties are performed properly (e) Meet at such times and places as required by these bylaws or the policy manual (f) Register their address, including any email address, with the secretary of the corporation (g) Approve the proposed annual ballot that includes a slate of qualified candidates for director (h) Elect officers of the corporation Per the CGJA Policy Manual, §3.000,

CGJA Directors and Officers 3.10 Director Responsibilities

The following are in addition to those duties outlined in Article 6 of the CGJA Bylaws:

A. Directors shall attend all board meetings except when excused by the president. Directors shall participate in teleconference or face-to-face board meetings at their own expense. Directors may be removed from the board if they fail to participate in two consecutive board meetings or a total of four meetings in any twelve-month period, except when excused by the president for good cause. B. Directors shall read and review all agenda packet items in preparation for each board meeting. C. Directors shall attend the CGJA Annual Conference and Annual Meeting unless excused by the president, and shall attend at their own expense. D. Each director shall be active on at least one of CGJA's committees. E. Directors shall monitor and, when necessary, promptly respond to email and voicemail communications regarding the business of the board and their committee(s). F. Directors shall avoid personal agendas and put personal differences aside in order to properly and fully satisfy their responsibility to serve the best interests of the association. Directors must become familiar with and be faithful to the association's missions and goals. Directors shall comply with the adopted Code of Conduct contained in the Directors' Handbook. G. Directors shall assume fiduciary responsibility for the association as required by law.

[Return to Journal](#)

Ask the Trainer, March 2025

Q. Our grand jury is struggling with writing our findings. What suggestions do you have?

A. You are not alone. A frequent shortcoming of grand jury reports is that some or all of the listed findings are not conclusions, but are just facts – that is, statements of what exists or what happened. In contrast, findings should express the jury’s judgments and conclusions. They are the jury’s verdict about how the entity operates.

Most findings are criticisms or statements identifying a problem related to the entity’s operational activities. Findings that show cause and effect – that a particular activity or the entity’s failure to act resulted in a problem – can be particularly effective.

A true finding includes judgmental words or phrases, such as the entity “failed” to follow its policy manual, or its services are “inadequate” or “tardy,” or that the entity violated the law or breached a contract. The key to writing a true finding is that it contains this kind of wording.

See Wording Your Findings on the CGJA website under [Sample Documents, Report Templates](#) or in the CGJA Report Writing Workshop Manual in Tab 2, page 14. It contains dozens of examples of judgmental language you can use in your findings.

Q. Our jury is confused on who we can require to respond to our reports and who should be listed in the “Invited Responses” section. Can you clarify this for us?

A. Penal Code §933(c) identifies the boards and individuals who are required to respond to the grand jury’s findings. Only the governing board of an entity or an elected county officer can be required to respond.

Penal Code §933(a) allows the grand jury to submit its report for comment to other “responsible” parties. This would include appointed department heads in either a county or a city, or a school district superintendent or special district manager.

CGJA has produced a table showing examples of required respondents and those who can be invited to respond. It can be found [here](#).

Q. When establishing timelines for releasing our reports, how much time should we include for exit interviews?

A. Exit interviews are an essential step in the process of producing a civil grand jury report. Juries should plan on at least one to three weeks for conducting exit interviews and any needed follow up. Exit interviews give the jury a chance to confirm its findings and to identify and correct errors that appear in the latest draft of the report, and they help make it more likely that the jury’s findings and recommendations will be accepted positively by the entity. Exit interviews should be conducted after the report is reviewed and approved by the legal advisor and before it is submitted to the judge for final approval.

The time needed for exit interviews can vary considerably. These interviews, which focus on whether the interviewee agrees with the findings, are relatively brief. When a report is directed at a single entity and the interviewee is readily available, the exit interview can take just a few days to schedule and less than an hour to conduct. If the interviewee agrees with the findings, the process is over.

More time will be needed for reports directed at multiple entities, such as several districts or cities. And if an interviewee disagrees with the findings, the committee should take the time to further investigate and then revise the report, if necessary. This could take two or more weeks because any revisions must be approved by the full grand jury and the legal advisor before the report is submitted to the judge. If juries are short on time, they can conduct exit interviews remotely on Zoom, Google Meet, or some other video conferencing service tool.

[Return to Journal](#)

Lloyd Bell – Contra Costa County

by John Bradley

On the day we spoke, Lloyd and his wife, Beverly (an equally energetic and long-term CGJA volunteer in her own right), had just returned from an activity-filled winter holiday in Ft. Meyers, Florida. "That's the kind of vacations we like," Lloyd notes. As big baseball fans, the highlight of their trip, Lloyd continues, "was attending a pre-Spring Training exhibition game between the Boston Red Sox and a local college team. It's fun to get into a smaller stadium, where you can practically reach out and touch the players!"



Both Lloyd and Beverly share a love of travel and a respect for history. "One of our favorite places to visit was the Normandy area of France. There's a lot of WWII history there, and the locals still remember Americans favorably," Lloyd notes.

"Another place that we really enjoy visiting is Flanders Field, in Belgium, which is a WWI cemetery. I've always been struck by the local population there who support that cemetery: all gravestones there have been adopted by citizens of the town. And throughout the year, they plant flowers and tend to those grave markers like they were family. It's just nice to see."

A native Californian, Lloyd Bell was born in Hemet, in the southern part of the State, but at the age of six months moved with his family to ranch in the Central Valley town of Turlock. A neighboring dairy farm was right down the road, and "I also worked there, through high school," he recalls. Not long after, Lloyd enlisted in the Army, where he received the training and assignments which allowed him to excel, and placed him alongside many top leaders, including Four-Star generals, a Department of State Minister Counselor and the Secretary of Defense. "The Army made sure to use your security clearance and your training to the fullest," he remembers. "I spent a year in Viet Nam, a year in Thailand, and seven years in Belgium, as well as state-side tours in California, Massachusetts, and Illinois."

During one state-side assignment, a chance encounter changed his life. Lloyd was attending military school in Indianapolis, and a serendipitous meeting in one of that city's bowling alleys led to marriage with Beverly, and in raising two sons together while stationed back in Europe. Now, with their 50th wedding anniversary approaching this summer, the two look forward to taking their entire extended family – including their two granddaughters and one grandson – on a Disney Cruise to celebrate the big occasion!

According to Lloyd, he was first bitten by the 'volunteerism bug' while in his late 30's, during his 'first career' working in the Army. "I had two boys who were small. And we had them in a Cub Scout unit that just wasn't doing anything for the boys," he explains. "My wife was a schoolteacher, and after hearing me grumble, she said, 'Look: *you* run it; I'll help you.' And so, I volunteered as Cub Master. And I had so much *fun* – it was amazing! That early situation was the spark; where you just knew you could do it better, and that the kids would be better off for it. That's why I did that; it was very rewarding."

Leaving the Army after a remarkable 21-year military career, Lloyd's military management experience in the service quickly landed him a position with Kraft Foods, which sent him and his family from Chicago to Minnesota and ultimately returned him to California before retiring for the *second* time, twenty years later.

It was then that his 'volunteerism gene' really kicked into high gear – leading to an unforeseen *third* career.

"After retiring from Kraft Foods in 2009, I was bored and just kicked around for a little bit. Then I saw a little ad in the newspaper that said, 'Contra Costa County is looking for people to join the grand jury, and to apply for grand jury service.' I really had no idea what that was all about. But I was looking for something to do, and sent in my application, and was selected! So that kind of put me on the road to grand jury service; that was my introduction."

Lloyd served as a member of the Contra Costa County 2010-2011 civil grand jury and then led it as foreperson the following year. He found the work to be very rewarding. "I learned that our (Contra Costa) county government was run pretty well," he shares. "But we also learned that there were some 'bad apples.' And it was a later grand jury that got the District Attorney removed from office. It was nice to know that local people could hold folks in the county accountable."

Before long, Lloyd's growing county grand jury involvement attracted the attention of the CGJA. "I was president of our county association, and CGJA approached us, wanting to know if we would be the host chapter for their next annual conference. I had been to a couple of the conferences, so I knew what they were about, and I talked our group into supporting that. Unbeknownst to me at the time, once CGJA found a host chapter, ALL the planning was turned over to them!" he laughs now. "But our county group got together, and we put together a nice program for them. And I realized that people get to do this *every* year – and that could be a fun thing to do. So, I joined CGJA, and I volunteered to run the conference committee for a while. Well, that's been ten years now.

"I think my greatest satisfaction has been the annual conferences; that's kind of why I've stayed with it for as long as I have."

When asked if he had any favorites among those ten conferences he's chaired, Lloyd immediately responds with two. "For the 2015 Conference, our keynote speaker was the Chief Justice of the California Supreme Court. That was a big score for us." (continued)

"And the other memorable conference was the last one (in Monterey 2024), where we were able to secure Leon Panetta as a speaker. We were fortunate to have the assistance of members with connections to the "gatekeepers" to these two speakers who ultimately brought them to us." "In my estimation, it was the keynote speakers that made both of those conferences as memorable as they were: they drew the attendance to make it noteworthy."

On top of his decade-plus as Annual Conference Committee Chair, Lloyd has frequently been called upon to provide double- and even triple-volunteer-duty for CGJA, often serving simultaneous roles as a director, as Finance Committee chair, and as vice president of the organization. His continuous and outstanding volunteer efforts have earned the respect and appreciation of his fellow volunteers who recognized Lloyd in 2019 with the CGJA's prestigious Angelo Rolando Service Award.

Later, Lloyd shared more about the appeal that volunteering with CGJA holds for him. "I like helping people. I like seeing things that need to be done (and aren't getting done), and getting involved and doing it."

For the last few years, Lloyd admits he's been re-focusing his volunteer energies almost exclusively on chairing the Annual Conference Committee and inspiring that team. "I really enjoy what I'm doing now. And we have a good group that puts together the programming; they have some great ideas," he says proudly. "My philosophy has always been [to] find the right people and get out of their way. And we've got some very good people on our Committee."

What does Bell see in CGJA's future, and what is the future of his own volunteering? "Our CGJA organization is in good hands these days," he emphasizes. "Our leaders seem to be very, very strong. I'm very pleased that, over the last three to four years, our leadership bench strength has grown tremendously – so that it's no longer necessary for a few individuals to shoulder all those different areas. And we have some very high-powered, highly qualified people in and running our committees, too! It's nice to see."

"We've come a long way in the last two years," Lloyd Bell concludes. "COVID was a major game-changer, for not only us, but for the chapters and the members that we serve. My estimation is that our membership will continue to grow. I also see more local chapters and members becoming engaged at the state level. I see us growing and becoming even more influential as time goes by."

"You know, I've enjoyed my time with CGJA," he adds. "I don't have plans to leave anytime soon."

[Return to Journal](#)

Best Grand Jury Report, Media Coverage Nominations Open

Winners in both categories will be honored at the CGJA Annual Conference Oct. 26 and 27 in San Luis Obispo.

The 2018-19 Contra Costa County Civil Grand Jury won Best Grand Jury Report honors last year for shining a spotlight on unsuitable facilities for children and adolescents receiving psychiatric emergency services at the Contra Costa Regional Medical Center. Remedies recommended by the grand jury were implemented – a testament to the thoroughness of the report. The 2024 award for Best Media Coverage went to Thaddeus Greenon, news editor of Humboldt County's *North Coast Journal*. He publicized civil grand jury report findings on Brown Act noncompliance by a local school board and providing his readers information about civil grand jury service.

Information about nominating and the nomination forms can be found at [Best Grand Jury Report](#) and [Best Media Coverage](#).

[Return to Journal](#)

Lou Panetta at JEM from Gary Cooper

"Lou did an absolutely wonderful job on introducing the audience to the civil grand jury. As one may have expected, most of the attendees were only familiar with trial juries. Having Lou dive into the topic of a civil grand jury was great. His talk garnered several questions and there was a good amount of conversation with representatives from the courts. Lou answered questions and walked everyone through the presentation in a highly skilled and professional manner (like he always does!)."

The conference hosts were fantastic. They made us feel very welcome and we were invited to join them for lunch. I want to give a special thanks to Clarence Harlow, JEM Board President for a warm welcome and a great introduction of CGJA as he invited Lou to the podium.

[Return to Journal](#)

CGJA Committee Volunteers Needed

Please contact the chair of your committee(s) of choice and volunteer!

Annual Conference Committee

Supervises the planning of the Annual Conference; suggests policy, and establishes procedures to plan, coordinate, and host the conference.

Committee needs: The ACC needs people who enjoy planning and assisting in organizing an informative conference program. This includes site selection, developing a conference theme and obtaining quality speakers and topics for the event. A willingness to assist others to facilitate a professional, informative program for members is a must. An interest in leading or assisting the leader in such a team is a plus. Experience in event planning and program content development is also a plus.

Contact: [Lloyd Bell](#)

Awards Committee

Oversees all awards, including the Angelo Rolando Service Award, Excellence in Reporting, and Certificates of Special Recognition.

Committee needs: Do you think that exemplary service should be recognized? If you answered "yes" then serving on the Awards Committee is a perfect fit. CGJA has several awards recognizing outstanding service to the Association.

Contact: [Joann Landi](#)

Bylaws and Policy Review Committee

Reviews proposed amendments to CGJA Bylaws and Policies or committee procedures and periodically conducts Bylaw and Policy updates.

Committee needs: BPRC needs an attorney with a strong background in California Nonprofit Corporate law to provide guidance to ensure our governing documents are following state law and reflect best practices.

Contact: [Larry Herbst](#)

Finance Committee

The Finance Committee reviews monthly and annual financial statements (Budget vs Actual Income Statement, Balance Sheet), Accounts Receivable and Accounts Payable Statements as well as bank statements and investment confirmations. The Committee also oversees restricted and non-restricted funds held by the association and creates receipt and expenditure policies that guide association officers and committees. The Committee meets monthly by Zoom.

Committee needs: Strong accounting and finance-oriented individuals with a good understanding of budgeting. Familiarity with QuickBooks (our accounting software) or other accounting software is desirable. It is helpful if candidates are inquisitive and desire to learn about the inner workings of our Finance Committee as well as other committee operations and their respective financial requirements to help improve CGJA with constructive suggestions.

Contact: [Don Freeman](#)

Legal and Legislative Resources Committee

Provides answers to questions regarding grand jury law process, powers and jurisdiction; monitors legislative activity regarding issues that affect the grand jury system.

Committee needs: An individual with significant experience with the ins and outs of the California legislative process.

Contact: [Karen Jahr](#)

Membership and Chapter Relations Committee

Recruits and welcomes new members; solicits ongoing member renewals; maintains CGJA membership databases; promotes, guides, and supports chapter formation; facilitates the exchange of information among chapters; liaises with members regarding membership issues and with chapters to offer support and guidance toward the resources available to them through CGJA; keeps the webmaster informed of changes in contact information relating to presidents of chapters and associations; oversees the CGJA volunteer program.

Committee needs: Volunteers who are interested in supporting and enhancing CGJA's mission in the following areas:

- Excel use and database management: MCRC currently maintains, updates and enhances the CGJA database covering the member, chapter, county, volunteer and roster datasets, all of which are integrated. We're looking for someone with extensive experience using Excel and database management who will become familiar with the files and processes, then take over the ongoing updating activities, propose and install enhancements and work as a team with the existing database manager. Time commitment varies depending on the time of year and activities involved, but will involve consistent activity throughout the year ranging from one up to 10 hours per week.
- Volunteer lead. MCRC currently has the default responsibility of receiving and allocating volunteer interest to various committees and functions within the association. We're looking for people with prior experience matching volunteers across a broad spectrum of activities within CGJA with an eye towards recruiting volunteers to support active succession planning. Time commitment varies but in general is not deadline based and can be up to 10 hours per month.
- Chapter relations and engagement. Have you been involved in organizations with local chapters? If so, we can use your assistance to

development and expand relations throughout the state. Time commitment varies but in general is not deadline based and can be up to 10 hours per month.

- Federal and state corporate and nonprofit compliance filing. CGJA and its chapters are required to comply with federal and state filing requirements. As chapters are legally organized differently depending on their particular requirements and interests, we're looking for volunteers who have experience in this arena and can assist existing procedural documents and confirming compliance with statutes. Time commitment varies but in general is not deadline based and can be up to 5 hours per month.
- Membership development: Have you worked in a nonprofit environment recruiting and expanding membership? If so, your input would be valued, especially as we view our members as a source of volunteers for the association. Time commitment varies but in general is not deadline based and can be up to 5 hours per month.

Contact: [Michael Hofman](#)

Public Relations Committee

Communicates and maintains the positive public image for the association. It establishes, maintains and communicates the image, message, brand identity, and the beneficial work of the California Civil Grand Jury System to the public.

Primary committee responsibilities include producing and distributing:

The *CGJA Journal* every even-numbered month

The CGJA News (a communication produced as needed and sent via email to members and others as appropriate)

All CGJA communication releases to external media sources, associations supporting grand juries, and the public relative to association events and newsworthy association or grand jury matters

Regular news eBlasts (when a single topic of a critical nature needs to be shared with the membership) sent via Constant Contact, an email marketing service CGJA contracts with to send out bulk emails

The posting of current news articles gathered from media sources regarding the impacts of California grand jury reports posted to Facebook and the CGJA website

CGJA and chapter logo style guidelines to ensure a consistent brand and a recognizable statewide presence

Committee needs: People who demonstrate creative thinking, strong writing and problem-solving skills, experience with online research and email campaigns, knowledge in using Microsoft Office computer products, a positive "customer service" focus, and an interest in working with us on activities relating to marketing and social media.

Contact: [John Bradley](#)

Technology 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; manages the website.

Committee needs: Assistant webmaster to become a second administrator working with the webmaster to maintain the CGJA website. This requires strong computer skills, experience with WordPress-based website designs, good working knowledge of Microsoft Office tools, knowledge of website navigation, and the ability to quickly learn new computer skills in a working environment. Will have specific responsibilities and over time become capable of managing the website for short periods of time independently. Must be detail oriented.

Contact: [Lou Panetta](#)

Training Committee

The Training Committee (TC) is responsible for all aspects of the development and delivery of the CGJA training program for new grand jurors, alternates, forepersons and pro tems, legal advisors, judges, and court personnel. TC responsibilities include curriculum development, planning and handling of logistics for all CGJA's training events, and the selection and development of new CGJA trainers. These tasks are handled by several subcommittees.

CGJA trainers and subcommittee members are not necessarily members of the Training Committee, but are welcome to attend meetings.

Committee needs:

1) Administrative help for the CGJA Training program – someone willing to assist the Training Committee Chair with administrative tasks, including: organization of training venues and schedule; communications with courts, counties, and grand juries; organizing logistics (manual distribution, equipment, refreshments, accommodations, etc.) for training venues; and other administrative tasks.

Skills required include use of email, good communication skills, organizational skills, and proficiency in Word and Excel.

2) CGJA Trainers – trainers needed in the topics of Local Government and Grand Jury Law (law degree required for the latter). Must be able to travel some and Zoom teach as needed.

Skills required include knowledge and experience gained through grand jury work (or as a grand jury's legal advisor) and good presentation skills; professional experience in teaching or training is helpful.

3) Video production – help needed to prepare script and oversee production of training videos; skills and experience in staging, producing, and

[Return to Journal](#)

Losing Our Home by Dale La Casella

Altadena is a foothill community in the unincorporated Los Angeles County area. My husband and I lived for thirty years in a historic 1905 craftsman bungalow originally built by the McNally family (think *Rand McNally* maps) for their nephew P. J. McNally. It was the first house built in the area when the McNally's subdivided some agricultural property on the west side of Altadena. The architect was George Webster, a disciple of the Green and Green Craftsman style. The area is presently known as a historic, mostly Black community, often underserved and underrepresented.

The Eaton Canyon Fire, started on Tuesday, January 7, 2025, at 6:18 PM, driven by record breaking Santa Ana winds. We received no alerts whatsoever until we heard our telephones sound an alarm at 3:45 AM on January 8. We evacuated quickly, taking only two cars, two laptops, one box of important papers, and our cat.



The destruction was total and devastating. There is virtually nothing left for blocks in any direction. The topography rises in elevation so that for those who live closer to the foothills, water must be pumped up from water storage tanks.

As it turned out, there were no efforts to fight the fire in our area, the fire hydrants were never opened, and no firefighters were ever there.

Fortunately, we had excellent insurance coverage, and they quickly found us temporary housing nearby. However, our lease expires soon, and we are still deciding what to do next. We will not rebuild our home, which was a historic property filled with irreplaceable one-of-a-kind belongings: heirlooms, antiques and original artist pieces; my artist studio, my husband's winery and library.

I am still making an inventory of possessions to complete our claim which is a chore. Our lives are going to change dramatically one way or another.

Lessons we learned, which may help others in California, are

1. Buy the best insurance you can afford, upgrade it periodically.
2. Take photographs of all your rooms, furnishings, possessions and even your landscaping.
3. Organize and keep all your important papers in a folder or box ready to grab in an emergency.
4. When they tell you to leave – do it! Your physical well-being is the most important thing.

I wish my fellow CGJ members who suffered similar devastation all the best and I sincerely hope none of the rest ever must go through an experience like this.

[***Return to Journal***](#)

from Costa County by Charles Cerjan, Chapter President

Recent impactful Contra Costa County Grand Jury reports on the hazardous material release community-wide notification system and leadership challenges in one of the County's cities were specifically cited. These reports required the active support and engagement of the Board of Supervisors, which the Board members clearly appreciated.

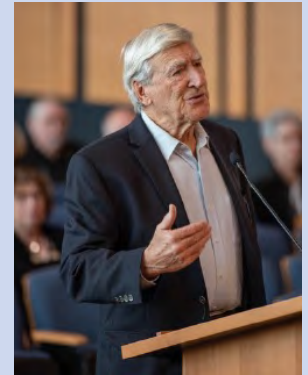
Photo: Bob Finlayson presenting at the February 25th Contra Costa Board of Supervisors meeting.

The stars of the show were the current jury members. Many members of the current jury found time to attend despite their crowded schedules.

The 2024-25 foreperson discussed the ongoing jury activities and emphasized the increasingly prominent role that the civil grand jury plays as a monitor of local governance, particularly with the decline of local investigative reporting. He also stressed the benefits of the association training and the association's continuing support.

The Board was clearly impressed by the strong jury representation and individually expressed their gratitude to the jury and their commitment to a productive working relationship.

Our chapter is fortunate to have such a close and beneficial relationship with the current jury and our board of supervisors.



[Return to Journal](#)

Lori Macdonald ✨ '05 B.A. Liberal Arts

Alumna leads as instructor for California Grand Juries

by DAISY RATZLAFF

LORI MACDONALD'S PASSION for education and community is as strong as ever. After dedicating 18 years to CSUCI and retiring in 2020, the 2005 Liberal Arts major has taken a unique path from being a non-traditional student and University staff member to serving as an instructor for Grand Juries with the Civil Grand Jury Association of California.

"I was part of that very first class in 2002 and worked in the Office of the President for Dr. Richard Rush. Over time, I was offered a position in the Enrollment Center by the Vice President for Student Affairs," she said. "I actually worked at the University from the moment it opened and retired during the Covid-19 pandemic."

Reflecting on the early days of CSUCI, when the campus only had a handful of students and classrooms, along with the Bell Tower "but not much else," Macdonald said it was "thrilling" to be part of something that was just beginning to take shape.

"It was so much fun to see this thing being built that was beneficial to so many different people and the community," she said. "We were pioneers; people getting a message out about the possibilities that higher education could bring."

Macdonald said her years of work as an Enrollment Center Specialist and a Coordinator of Student Recruitment Programs allowed her

to witness the transformative power of education, especially for students from underserved backgrounds.

"It's like dropping a pebble in the pond and you get that ripple that forms outward," Macdonald said. "It doesn't just change a family; it changes whole communities."



Upon retiring, the Southern California native, who spent much of her youth in Palmdale, initially anticipated a quieter life. However, she quickly found a new calling.

"I thought I would be sitting on my laurels, not doing much of anything," she said with a smile. "In reality, after six months there was this little blurb on Nextdoor about becoming

a Ventura County grand jury member, so I applied and was chosen."

Selected through a blind process after passing background checks, Macdonald served on the grand jury for two years, becoming the foreperson in her second year.

During that time, she was also approached by the Civil Grand Jury Association of California to train new grand jurors. In her current role, she now travels several months a year to conduct training sessions – both in-person and via Zoom – across different counties, where she educates jurors about responsibilities and provides practical advice.

"I am training other grand juries on how to be a grand juror, including report writing, which is mandated by penal code," she said.

Macdonald's passion for the University hasn't diminished. She remains active in the alumni community, attends events like Dodger Day and the Campus Reading Celebration, and engages with the Retiree

Association. She especially enjoys connecting with former student assistants whom she managed during her time at the University and considers one of her greatest accomplishments.

"It brings me great joy to see how successful they have been, going where life takes them," she said. "It's kind of like watching your kids grow up. It's fun."

[Return to Journal](#)

Board Actions

02-25-25

Ratified appointment of Dan (Don) Freeman as Director for central region.

Approved up to \$600 in travel expenses for Lou Panetta to address conference.

Chapter Guidelines action tabled.

Approved up to \$15,000 for expenses for unplanned projected costs associated with finance process improvements.

03-04-25 Executive Committee

Approved an additional \$500.00 to cover the additional fees for preparing CGJA 2024 tax forms for a total amount of \$2,500.

[***Return to Journal***](#)

Civil Grand Jurors' Association of California
Balance Sheet
As of December 31, 2024

	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Chase Checking & Savings	116,755
Training Reserve	30,000
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	\$ 146,755
Special Funds	
Restricted Funds	
Training Video Production	50,000
Rainy Day Fund	50,000
Total Restricted Funds	\$ 100,000
Memorial & Scholarship Funds	
J. Zepp Fund	2,200
Ron Miguel & Audrey Lynberg Training Scholarship	7,550
James Ragan Memorial Fund	901
Bill Trautman Memorial Fund	4,410
Total Memorial & Scholarship Funds	\$ 15,061
TOTAL SPECIAL FUNDS	\$ 115,061
Fixed Assets	\$0
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 261,816
LIABILITIES	\$0
EQUITY	\$ 261,816
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	\$ 261,816

Civil Grand Jurors' Association of California
Annual Membership Report: Income Statement
Fiscal Year Ending December 31, 2024

	FYE 12/31/2024
Income	
Administration	\$ 6,828
Finance Committee	4,654
Membership Relations	7,900
Annual Conference	15,679
Training	205,720
Other Committees and Workgroups	1,665
Total Income	\$ 242,445
 Expenses	
Administration	\$ 6,746
Finance Committee	2,580
Membership Relations	-
Annual Conference	19,203
Training Committee	176,374
Other Committees and Workgroups	3,070
Total Expenses	\$ 207,973
Net Income	\$ 34,473

[***Return to Journal***](#)