



CGJA Journal

Vol. 26, No. 1, February 2025

Let's Get On It! *Grand Jury Awareness Month*

During his term, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proclaimed each February as Grand Jury Awareness Month. Some California counties do that. Others choose March.

This year our Public Relations Committee reached out to each county – through the chapters or by directly contacting court executive offices where there are no chapters. They were offered a template proclamation to share with their Board of Supervisors.

If your county makes a proclamation – please send us (John Bradley dbindowney@gmail.com) pictures and any press coverage so that we can recognize you in the *Journal*.

DON'T MISS IT!

Multi-Chapter Meeting, Feb. 9

Our next **Multi-Chapter Meeting** is **Wednesday, February 19** from **3-5 p.m.** The November meeting drew a large attendance. We hope that we can continue this enthusiasm.

The meeting is aimed at chapter officers. However, all members are welcome to participate. The agenda and zoom link will be sent out a few days beforehand.

To participate and receive the Zoom information, please RSVP **Sharon DeBenedetti** (MCRC, Chapter Relations) sharon@debenedettis.com.

Ask the Trainers by the Training Committee Co-chairs



Marsha Caranci

QUESTIONS

We would like to release our first individual report early this year. Can our presiding judge require our jury to delay releasing any of our reports until the end of our term? The custom within our county is for the civil grand jury to release all reports only at the end of the term as part of a final consolidated report.

I recently attended your Report Writing Workshop and found it very informative and helpful. One question I didn't think to ask at the time is this: Is there a general recommendation for the length of a report? I understand that it will vary by topic, but what is the range of how many pages you typically see?



Richard Rogers

Can our grand jurors use email to correspond with each other and with employees of entities we are investigating? How do we ensure confidentiality?

Read the answers.

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.

Why I Volunteer



We are taking a close look at the nearly 200 volunteer positions in the CGJA. We find an amazing array of talent and expertise.

In the October issue, we featured member, **Laurie Griffin**, who provides valuable and essential logistic support for our training efforts.

This month's recognized volunteer is our Assistant Treasurer, **Loydyne Lane** from Nevada County. **Read more** about Loydyne.

Thanks to our wonderful members who support our mission through their membership each year

Just a quick reminder – membership in CGJA expires Dec. 31 of each year. When you renew, we'll let you know that we received your renewal and when your membership expires.



We'll send a renewal reminder in late October to members whose membership expires at the end of the current year.

Please help us out by renewing after you receive the first reminder (and yes we'll extend your membership until the end of the following year). If you have any questions about your membership email us at membership@cgja.org.



Los Angeles

January 8, 2025: tragedies and joy for one current (2024-25) and three former (2022-23) Civil Grand Jurors on the same day. [Read more.](#)



Monterey

The **Monterey Chapter** was recognized at its holiday luncheon for its superb contribution to the success of the 2024 CGJA Annual Conference.



Monterey Chapter Members who volunteered and contributed to the success of the CGJA Annual Conference. Pictured from left are Maria Garcia, John Geiss, Tom Mastre, Marianne Howard, Andi Kingman, Jody Hansen, Marilyn Maxner, and Gwen Usher.

In addition to handling conference registration and greeting attendees, the silent auction, and the conference Q&A sessions, the chapter secured the appearance of the former Secretary of State, Leon Panetta.



Lou Panetta presents Tom Mastre, president of the Monterey Chapter, with the **Certificate of Recognition**.

The **Certificate of Special Recognition** reads "The Monterey Chapter provided invaluable service resulting in a very successful annual conference in Monterey. Their efforts to secure a nationally known keynote speaker resulted in record attendance at the annual conference. The chapter should be proud of their service as the Host Chapter, setting a high standard for other chapters to follow."

Alameda

The Alameda chapter is hosting a **regional meeting** on **Tuesday, February 18, at 10 a.m.** at the Rockridge Library in Oakland (looks like it includes lunch).

For details, contact Paul Sullivan sullyp95@gmail.com.



new MEMBERS

Name	County
Joanne Elizabeth Sarmento	Contra Costa
Linda Murray Jorgensen	Contra Costa
David Hulme	El Dorado
Thomas McCreary	El Dorado
Amber Siepmann	El Dorado
Sheila Brookman	Fresno
Gary Mukai	Fresno
Barbara Rogers	Fresno
Carole Tompsett	Fresno
Linda Ann Abbott	Glenn
Sherry Brott	Glenn
Norma Chavez	Glenn
Deborah Fogarty	Glenn
Carol Ann McCoy	Glenn
Timothy McCoy	Glenn
Kaitlin Simas	Glenn
Jeannie Swope	Glenn
Llanira Valencia	Glenn
Michael Warner	Glenn
Marvin White	Glenn
Michele Whittington	Glenn
Daryl Ngee Chinn	Humboldt
Connie DeCoe-Munier	Humboldt
Jeffrey Schmidt	Lake
Patricia Barrett	Marin
Mardi Diamond	Marin
Patricia Goodman	Marin
Charles Schwarze	Marin
Eric Hart	Mendocino
Gregory Tetteimer	Orange
Timothy Wallace	Placer
Jane Parsons	Sacramento
Reginald Clark	San Bernardino
James Goodrich	San Bernardino
Jay Lark	San Diego
Christina Gonzaga-Rockett	San Joaquin
Kevin Curley	San Luis Obispo
Grace Hayes	San Luis Obispo
Lisa Pollock	Santa Cruz
Michael Brokloff	Shasta
Mary Speigle	Shasta
Melissa Kirk	Shasta

Recent Board Actions – [Click here.](#)

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.

March 24, 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 *Grand Jurors' 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

Q. We would like to release our first individual report early this year. Can our presiding judge require our jury to delay releasing any of our reports until the end of our term? The custom within our county is for the civil grand jury to release all reports only at the end of the term as part of a final consolidated report.

A. Penal Code section 933(a) states that the jury can submit its reports to the judge at any time during its term, but it does not require the judge to release them to the public within any particular time frame. The judge's approval is required before public release of a civil grand jury report. Most judges review and approve a report's release soon after it is submitted to the court, ensuring its timeliness. On rare occasions, a judge can block a report's release, but only if it is outside the grand jury's jurisdiction. CGJA recommends taking a diplomatic approach with the judge to explain why timely report releases are preferable to releases delayed to the end of the jury term.

Here are the reasons CGJA recommends early release of individual reports:

- Staggered releasing of reports will spread out the workload of the jury, legal advisor, and judge
- Jury recommendations for improving the operation of local governments can be considered and implemented more quickly
- Reports released individually are likely to get more of the public and media attention that every report deserves
- Some individual reports released simultaneously within a compendium of reports are at an increased risk of being ignored by the public and the media

Q. I recently attended your Report Writing Workshop and found it very informative and helpful. One question I didn't think to ask at the time is this: Is there a general recommendation for the length of a report? I understand that it will vary by topic, but what is the range of how many pages you typically see?

A. There is certainly no hard and fast rule. We at CGJA read a lot of grand jury reports each year, and they range from four or five pages to fifty or more. We recommend that a report be easily readable by the governmental entity and official and also by the public. We believe an average-length report, usually about 8-12 pages, is most likely to be read.

Here is a link to "Examples of Well-Written Reports" on our website: [Examples of Well-Written Reports - Civil Grand Jurors' Association](#). You will note that most of them fall into this 8-12 page range.

Sometimes we see reports that include pages of appendices, numerous footnotes or endnotes, or very long bibliographies. None of these are necessary – the grand jury does not need to provide references for all information gathered during an investigation. The reader should be able to tell from the Methodology section that multiple resources were used and should assume that the jury verified all the facts in their report from multiple sources. The jury's job is to gather and verify information and then report its findings (conclusions based on the verified facts). Citing the source of the facts is not needed and could be considered raw evidence. A few references might be interesting and informative, but a long list of resources only adds to the length of the report. To protect your sources, cite only public domain documents, not information provided by a witness.

Q. Can our grand jurors use email to correspond with each other and with employees of entities we are investigating? How do we ensure confidentiality?

A. Yes, email can be used if these considerations are kept in mind:

- Email correspondence from grand jurors should never contain confidential information in the subject line or body of the email or in the file name of an attachment. All attachments should be password protected.
- If the email does not contain confidential information, it is fine to communicate this way, especially among grand jurors. For instance, you might send an email about when the next full jury or committee meeting is being held. If you don't discuss the subject of the meeting in detail, it does not need to be considered confidential.
- Email communication with non-jurors must never reveal any confidential information. For this reason, it is usually used only to schedule interviews or site visits or to request public records of general interest. Specific documents related to the topic being investigated should be requested in person during an interview, or over the phone, using an admonition.
- You may schedule or confirm an interview by email, but make sure the subject matter of the interview is not disclosed.

You may schedule or confirm an interview by email, but make sure the subject matter of the interview is not disclosed.

Email should never be used to ask questions as part of an investigation. While the Penal Code refers to interviews and document requests, it does not authorize the use of written questions (known as "interrogatories"). Asking questions would improperly reveal the nature of the jury's investigation.

There is a sample of a confidentiality disclaimer for emails on our website under [Sample Documents](#).

[Return to Journal](#)

Loydyne Lane - Nevada County

by Juliana Jones

Winston Churchill is quoted as saying

"We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give."

Loydyne Lane has done that most of her life and continues to do so. She is currently the Assistant Treasurer of the CGJA – a role that fits her life experiences to a T. She has a BA/MBA from St. Mary's College in Moraga, CA. Her career included experience in banking (AVP and Assistant Controller of a 60-branch bank), management consulting (Manager with KPMG), and volunteer/board positions on multiple non-profit organizations.



She served on the Nevada County Civil Grand Jury – 2018-2023 and found it to be the most rewarding volunteer experience of her life.

"I had always been frustrated by our political system – I always voted, but didn't feel as if my one vote really made that much of a difference. Since my consulting work was 80% travel; I wasn't home enough to do much else," she said. "After I retired, I joined the Nevada County Civil Grand Jury because I finally had the time, and it seemed interesting - different from my previous volunteer activities. I discovered I had finally a way to make a difference in my own community."

What she liked most was learning something new about county government and her community she could never have learned in any other way. It was never boring. A new document or an interview could quickly change the direction of an investigation.



The committees she spent the most time on were Finance and Special Districts. In the process of serving, she learned about CGJA.

"I found that I could support the statewide jury system through the CGJA," Lane continued. "California is so fortunate to have the county-based civil grand juries, and I believe the CGJA training is critical to their effectiveness."

"I continue to find new ways to support the work of the civil grand jury system. During my last year with the Nevada County Civil Grand Jury, we established a chapter. I became the President of the Nevada County Chapter. Our chapter supports the grand jury through education and recruitment."



Lane is very interested in education, chapter activities, and training. Two years ago, the Nevada County Chapter had a booth at a Home and Garden Show. They found that 70% of the 196 people they talked to could not answer the question "do you know what a civil grand jury is?" It has been her goal to educate. CGJA agrees with her that every Californian should understand the civil grand jury system. Presentations, OLLI classes, and other educational activities can support these efforts.

So, what does she do in her little bit of off time?

"I'm having to think about this one – I have lots of interests besides the civil grand jury, from genealogy (I located a maternal ancestor who was captured and killed by pirates.) to gardening, painting, and writing; I once bowled a 243 game. My main problem is that I don't have enough time for all of my hobbies."

Would she encourage readers to volunteer?

"Definitely. Volunteering has added excitement, challenge, new interests, friends, rewards, and more throughout my life – from my daughter's Girl Scout troop to leadership in work-related training and conferences, my church, and community activities."

Find out about volunteer opportunities at cgja.org/volunteer-for-cgja.

[Return to Journal](#)

On January 8, 2025, one current and two former CGJ jurors lost their homes to devastating wind-driven fires: Margaret Hatfield and James Childress in the "Palisades" fire, Dale La Casella in the "Eaton" fire. These fires rank as one of the costliest natural disasters in U.S. history. Our prayers go out to our three CGJ colleagues as they struggle to rebuild their lives.

Incredibly, at almost the same time, on January 8 at 6:07 PM, former CGJ juror Leslie Flores gave birth to her new son!

A current juror and her husband, both retirees, lived in the Palisades Bowl Mobile Home Park, a former jewel overlooking the California coast (see the picture). They lost their home in the Palisades fire and now live in a motel. Nevertheless the juror continues to work productively on the current Civil Grand Jury through the end of her term in June 2025.



James Childress: James (2022-23 CG juror) and his wife's custom-built home, very near the Will Rogers State Historic Park, was destroyed by the Palisades fire. The good news is that he and his family have moved quickly into a rental house in Encino, CA. He says healing has started, his son will keep going to his high school, and structure and routine will return. He appreciates the offers of help and heartfelt words of encouragement from his fellow former CGJ jurors.

Dale La Casella: Dale (2022-23 CG juror) and her husband lost their charming home in Altadena, including a barn with her art studio, to the Eaton fire above Pasadena. She reported that all of Altadena Drive, from Fair Oaks Ave. to Lake Ave., was burned to the ground. The good news is her insurance agent helped Dale and her husband quickly find a temporary house in Sunland, CA to move into, and she can begin rebuilding a new life.

Leslie Flores: Leslie (both 2022-23 and 2023-24 CG juror) served on CGJs with James and Dale and is founding board member and webmaster of the Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jurors' Association.

Leslie gave birth to her new son, Joseph Conlon Lamberton, on January 8, 2025, at Hollywood Presbyterian Hospital. Her healthy baby weighed 8 lbs./10 oz. and was 21.5 inches at birth.



Some have suggested an amusing nickname "Fuego Flores" because he was born on the same day as the devastating fires! Her fellow former CGJ jurors congratulate and wish Leslie all the best for her new family!

Recent Board Actions

01/28/25

Ratified the appointments of Lou Panetta Chair of NEC; Larry Herbst and Dave Chapel (Southern Region); Bob Finlayson and Nancy Bauman (Central Region); and Jim Glover and Ray Frisbee (Northern Region) as committee members.

[*Return to Journal*](#)