



CGJA Journal

Vol. 28, No. 5, October 2026

TIME IS RUNNING OUT!

The **43rd annual CGJA Annual Conference and Membership meeting** in Sacramento, held on **November 1-2, 2026**, is coming your way soon.

Now is the time to register. Time is also running out to secure your sleeping room reservation, as the negotiated CGJA rates are only guaranteed through October 10, 2026. Book now to secure the preferred rate.

- Keynote speaker Dan Walters (well-known CalMatters columnist) will update us on all the goings-on in California.
- Agenda is filled with value-added breakout sessions with information that can be used to further your efforts in support of the grand jury system, or within your own home chapter.
- This year's Angelo Rolando recipient will be announced at the delicious plated Sunday evening meal.
- Rounding out the evening is the conclusion of the silent and live auction.

You will not want to miss the conclave this year as we gather to renew acquaintances and celebrate our volunteers. To register for the conference, review the program, and find the link to the hotel for sleeping room reservations, click [here](#).

We look forward to seeing you there!

Welcome, CGJA Board Electees



Barbara Ferguson(North)



Loydyne Lane (North)



Gary Cooper (Central)



Mike Hofman (Central)



Larry Herbst (South)



Lou Panetta (South)

Vote Tally

North Region

Barbara Ferguson: 18
Loydyne Lane: 21

Central Region

Nancy Baumann: 28
Gary Cooper: 41
Mike Hofman: 36
Write-ins:
Bruce Frank: 1
Paul Raineri: 1

South Region

Larry Herbst: 29
Lou Panetta: 34

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 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 looking at the responses to one of last year's reports. Is it okay to ask one of the holdover grand jurors more about the investigation that took place last year?

Our jury is now receiving and reviewing required responses to reports issued by last year's jury. What are our options for reporting on these responses?

We have a committee whose members have agreed on a general topic they want to investigate, but it is too broad. Some research is needed to make it more specific. Could you provide some direction to help keep us from taking on a too-large topic?

Read the answers.



Richard Rogers



Help Make the 2026 CGJA Auction a Success

As excitement builds for our Annual Conference on **November 1-2, 2026**, in Sacramento, we're reaching out about one of the conference's most anticipated traditions: the **CGJA Auction**.

The auction is more than just a fun event. Funds raised directly support the Annual Conference by helping keep registration costs affordable for members. Thanks to your generosity, last year's auction raised **over \$4,800**, helping offset conference expenses and making attendance more accessible. [Read more](#).

CGJA Volunteer Service Anniversary Honor Roll

It's the Year of the Volunteer! Our dedicated volunteers continue to be the lifeblood of CGJA, and each issue of the *Journal* will be celebrating outstanding individuals who have recently reached Volunteer Service Anniversary Milestones, as well as the newest additions to our volunteer ranks. Thank you, volunteers, and congratulations!

October/November 2026 Service Anniversary 5-Year Volunteers

Dan Freeman (*San Mateo*)
Steve Rubin (*Monterey*)

Honorees will be recognized during a special Volunteer Recognition ceremony on November 1 at the 2026 CGJA Annual Conference in Sacramento. We look forward to seeing you there!

New Volunteers

Mindy Anderson (*Marin*)
Karen Buchko (*Yolo*)
Mike Familia (*Yolo*)
Jim Ferguson (*Placer*)
Ahna Heller (*Yolo*)
Richard Zeiger (*Yolo*)

CGJA has critical needs for expertise across the organization. [Learn more](#) about matching your talents and interests with the many available volunteer opportunities within CGJA.

Humboldt's Young Grand Juror Kaitlyn Bucher-DeMarino

In August, Foreperson, Connie DeCoe-Munier had the opportunity to interview Kaitlyn "Kat" Bucher DeMarino, the youngest member of the 2026-27 Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury. Kat was 19 years old when she was sworn in on July 1, 2026. She turned twenty on July 25th.

She is a very conscientious hard worker, and studies issues thoroughly. She contributes regularly. Kat volunteered to be secretary for the jury and is doing a great professional job at taking minutes in addition to her other tasks on the jury. [Read more.](#)



behind the scenes

Lori Macdonald – "Why I Volunteer" by John Bradley



"If I want to see the world a better place, I feel it's up to me to work to see that change," three-year CGJA volunteer Lori Macdonald states emphatically. "It sounds cliché, but I've always walked that path... that it's up to me to give back to the world. With every opportunity I've had, I've always tried to involve myself in giving back."

Lori recalls that she first discovered the rewards of volunteering at an early age. "I was very young, probably in middle school, when I first started volunteering: it was at a summer camp, teaching the kids arts and crafts – and it just sounded like fun to me!" She continued her volunteer efforts as a hospital 'Candy Striper' during high school, and later as a 'Wish Granter' with the Make-A-Wish Foundation. [Read more.](#)



CHAPTER LIAISONS

In place of a featured chapter, this issue's column gives an in-depth picture of the Chapter Relations Subcommittee's Chapter Liaison Program.

Building Connections: The Role of the Chapter Liaison

by Sharon DeBenedetti, Chair, Chapter Relations Subcommittee

Strong chapters are an important part of CGJA. They bring together former civil grand jurors, support work of civil grand juries throughout California, assist local superior courts when requested, and help maintain an active connection between CGJA and civil grand jury communities across the state.

Recognizing the importance of those connections, the Chapter Relations Subcommittee (CRS) the "Chapter Liaison Program" to provide each chapter with a familiar and accessible point of contact within CGJA. [Read more.](#)

CHAPTER CONNECTIONS

from Mother Lode (Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne)

by Brenda McHenry, President

The Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors approved the report of the 2025-26 Civil Grand Jury by a 3-2 vote after a heated discussion. Some supervisors believed they had been personally attacked in the report entitled "Government Practices Impacting Public Trust".

Members of that jury, now private citizens, responded with a letter to the board, objecting to the statement and declaring; "The county's responses were unnecessarily aggressive and adversarial. The message seemed to be: 'The Grand Jury asked questions we did not like, and we are going to explain why they had no business asking them.' Disagreement is part of government, but attacking the investigators' credibility or dismissing the process does not address the substance of their findings."

At subsequent board of supervisor's meetings, some of the former jurors spoke directly to the board about its comments. Civil grand juries spend a great deal of time and careful research in preparing their reports, a fact also addressed in their letter. Following up on reports is essential, especially when a jury is publicly castigated. These former grand jurors are to be congratulated for continuing to set the record straight. [Read](#) the full letter.

from Yolo

The dues for our new chapter didn't go very far, so we held a multi-family yard sale. We also used it as an opportunity to interest people in grand jury service. We had plenty of grand jury brochures on hand.



From the left: Karen Buchko, Ahna Heller, Barbara Sommer, and Mike Familia.
We made \$600!

FYI – if you want some ideas for creating media for your county, watch for the forthcoming **Print Media Guide** and other helpful information on the Public Relations Committee’s soon-to-be posted webpage (or you can send a note to editor@cgja.org and get the PDF now).

Before the Pace Picks Up

December 31 marks the end of the CGJA membership year. **AVOID** the end-of-year rush and **renew your membership now**, which will extend to December 31, 2027. It takes only a few minutes, and you can do it [here](#).

Introductory members note, this is when you can convert to dues paying membership (and stay active). We hope you will.



Name	County
Marcia Valenstein	Alameda
Bill Blaylock	El Dorado
Debbie Jackson	El Dorado
Kat Bucher DeMarino*	Humboldt
Kate Schafer	Humboldt
Mindy Anderson	Marin
Rob Au	Mendocino
Randall Harr	Modoc
Kai Romano	Modoc
Tom Burnham	Orange
Malai Magruder	Orange
Diana Mendez	Orange
Jim Ferguson	Placer
Donna O'Leary	Placer
Barbara Creedon	San Mateo
Eileen Berry	Sonoma
Char Cano	Stanislaus
Jess Cox	Tuolumne

*Lifetime member

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.

November 23, 2026

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 [presidents](#) and websites.

STAY CONNECTED



[Visit our website](#)

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Ask the Trainers

Q. Our grand jury is looking at the responses to one of last year's reports. Is it okay to ask one of the holdover grand jurors more about the investigation that took place last year?

A. Every grand juror takes an oath that they will "...not disclose any evidence brought before the grand jury, nor anything which I or any other grand juror may say, nor the manner in which I or any other grand juror may have voted on any matter..." This means that a grand juror should never discuss any information from an investigation that does not appear in the grand jury report with anyone outside of that year's grand jury, including members of the following year's grand jury.

Q. Our jury is now receiving and reviewing required responses to reports issued by last year's jury. What are our options for reporting on these responses?

A. Under Penal Code §933, governing boards and elected county officials must respond to grand jury reports within a specified time limit and with specific language. Your jury has several options. While there is no legal requirement for a grand jury to do anything with responses to previous reports, you should at least make sure the responses get posted on the grand jury website because they are public records.

CGJA recommends that juries review all required responses to determine whether they comply with the Penal Code. Monitoring and publicizing the responses to grand jury reports helps maintain pressure on local government entities to respond properly to reports. If the jury determines there is serious non-compliance such as a failure to respond, the jury might consider releasing a response compliance report. A response compliance report should address only whether the mandated responses of the boards and elected county officials complied with the timeliness and language requirements of the Penal Code. And the report should not address the responses of invited respondents – only required respondents.

The response compliance report must include findings that indicate whether the responses were submitted on time and included the specific language, explanation, or timeframe required by law. A sample response compliance report may be found on CGJA's website [here](#) or in Tab 7 of CGJA's *Training and Reference Manual*, pages 19-22.

Some juries produce an unnecessarily long compliance report (sometimes referred to as a "continuity report") recording all responses to all findings and recommendations from the previous jury's reports, even when most responses are compliant. This can take valuable time away from more worthwhile investigations that lead to improvements in government operations. Instead, the jury can simply issue a press release with a link to the website when the responses are posted.

Q. We have a committee whose members have agreed on a general topic they want to investigate, but it is too broad. Some research is needed to make it more specific. Could you provide some direction to help keep us from taking on a too-large topic?

A. When a very broad topic comes up, the committee should try to narrow it through focused research to clarify the problem. Using homelessness as an example, the committee might find something during their research that takes them to a specific concern (drug abuse, mental health, or lack of affordable housing, for example), which might lead to such entities as a drug task force, the county mental health department, or the city or county housing authority. That's the easiest way to try to narrow a broad topic to a particular entity. That initial research can be done as part of the topic selection process if it is limited to public information. But once the committee determines that they want to interview someone or request documents or take a tour, it becomes a public action and must be approved by the full panel as part of an investigation or inquiry.

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Help Make the 2026 CGJA Auction a Success

Each year, the auction grows in both enthusiasm and generosity. The remarkable variety and quality of donated items showcase the creativity, talents, and community spirit of CGJA members throughout the state.

Popular Auction Donations include:

- Artisan crafts and fine art
- Gift certificates to local restaurants and businesses
- Themed gift baskets
- Collections of items that represent your county
- Travel packages and weekend getaways
- Wine and specialty beverages
- Unique collectibles



This year, we're delighted to feature a beautiful original painting, pictured here, generously donated by **Martha Saldaña-Wolf of Sonora County**.

We will also hold a live auction featuring a **casino getaway package**, generously provided by our host chapter, Yolo County.

If you would like to donate, please contact the [Auction Committee](#) (*please include the word 'Auction' in your email's subject line*) as soon as possible. We ask that you provide a brief description of your item, any interesting background or story associated with it, and an estimated value.

Donated items should be delivered to the conference by **1 p.m. on Sunday, November 1**, so they can be displayed when the conference begins. If transportation or delivery presents a challenge, the committee will gladly assist with arrangements. We will provide all bid sheets and handle the auction display setup.

We encourage everyone to help make this year's auction our most successful yet. Whether you donate an item, place a bid, volunteer your time, or simply enjoy the festivities, your participation helps to strengthen our organization and support the conference experience for all members.

We are also looking for volunteers to join our Auction Team. If you're interested in helping, we'd love to hear from you – annualconference@cgja.org (*please include the word 'Auction' in your email's subject line*)

Thank you for your continued support, generosity, and commitment to CGJA. We look forward to seeing you in Sacramento, celebrating our accomplishments together, and raising the resources needed to continue our important work.

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Humboldt's Young Grand Juror: Kaitlyn Bucher-DeMarino
by Connie DeCoe-Munier

Kat is a fast learner and regularly gives a fresh younger opinion on issues. We are privileged to have Kat as a member of the 2026-27 Humboldt County Civil Grand Jury.

Why did you want to join the civil grand jury? It was a way for me to get my feet wet in local government which is something I have always been interested in.

How are you finding it? Very intellectually stimulating and a little bit fun. I am better at taking minutes than I thought.

Tell me a little bit about your background. I attended public school all through my education. I am a child of two loving parents and live in a little apartment in Arcata. We have had some unique challenges namely that my mother is a quadriplegic from MS (multiple sclerosis). My father and I take care of her physical needs, and she takes care of me and nurtures me emotionally in all the ways she can't physically.

Have you ever thought about teaching government to young people? Yes! I was always the person who brought up politics and government, and I would never tell people how to vote but tried to tell people to vote if they could.

Right now, our alternate pool is deleted, would you be interested in recruiting younger people? Yes! In fact, I have a lead on a person right now. But I would be interested in further recruitment.

Do you have any ideas for recruitment right now? Events on the Arcata Plaza, and I would be willing to travel the county to recruit. Plus, this will give me the opportunity to explore areas in the county. I am glad to see that we have a diverse group this year, but not all people in our community are represented. We would like to see tribal representatives and Hispanic representatives. We are looking for qualified jurors from all walks of life.

Finishing Statement. I am looking forward to this year's grand jury. We have a good group. (*ed. note - Kat is a CGJA Lifetime Member*)

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Lori was born in Los Angeles, moving briefly to the Antelope Valley before growing up in Ventura County. She currently lives in Camarillo, with her husband, Alec, and their two cats, Lily and Rose. She enjoys keeping in touch with her son and two granddaughters, who live across the country in Virginia. Lori shares that she and her husband enjoy 'active' vacations, and are looking forward to their first Alaskan cruise in September – and especially of partaking all the off-ship excursions and adventures that they can squeeze in.

Post-high school, Lori's educational and career paths incorporated several stops, starts and interesting detours in between. She began by studying accounting and worked in that field for several years. Having studied martial arts as a young adult, Lori embraced an opportunity to own and operate her own karate studio, where she taught many children and adults over the next five years. When the studio's rent became prohibitive, Lori again utilized the circumstance as a positive opportunity to reassess her direction. "I asked myself, 'What do I want to do?' A new university had just opened nearby, and I decided I wanted to go back to school for a teaching credential."

That next chapter unfolded at the brand-new Cal State University Channel Islands campus – in Ventura County, near Camarillo – which first opened to students in August 2002. Lori took a chance on them, and it changed everything. "It just so happened that while I was in school there, the University also made me a job offer I couldn't refuse!" So, Lori worked full time while still going to school until her graduation with a BA in Liberal Studies and History in 2005 and then continued at the university for a full twenty-year career – mainly in recruitment and admissions but also including a stint working directly for the president of the university. Flexibility and adaptability were key, she recalls. "Being in a new, start-up university, we all had to wear many hats." Her final project there involved working with area high school principals and teachers, creating curricula – in English and Math – to better-prepare current high school students for the upcoming rigors of college-level courses.

When COVID hit, Lori accepted a retirement offered by her university. "But I'm not good at sitting and doing nothing," she laughs. She immediately set about looking for new projects.

Her first introduction to civil grand juries came when she applied for Ventura County's 2022-23 jury. "I found that I absolutely loved jury work," Lori recalls. "I've always appreciated and enjoyed research, so for me it was a very natural fit. I also I liked the idea of it being a great way to give back to your community – you *know* that you're doing something good."

Lori quickly discovered, however, that serving on the jury in Ventura County came with an extra responsibility. "In Ventura," she notes, "the current civil grand jury is also responsible for recruiting the *next* Jury. That can be a full-time job." Eager to glean helpful recruiting ideas, Lori made her way to the 2023 CGJA Annual Conference, where several breakout sessions about 'recruiting jurors' were listed on the program. She was then able to bring the tools she learned at that event back to her Ventura County colleagues, where their successful efforts later that year resulted in "over fifty applications [for jurors] – that's unheard of in Ventura County," she says proudly.

The following year, after Lori had returned for a second jury term and was serving as foreperson, CGJA's Training group approached her and asked if she'd be interested in becoming a trainer for the state association. She agreed, and 2026 marks Lori's third consecutive season as a trainer. She confides that it's become her favorite CGJA role so far.

"I love training! It's the 'educator' in me: I like to see the development of people, and where they end up, and watching them grow along the spectrum, and reaching their potential. Plus," she adds, "trainers tend to be 'people' people – we just enjoy each other's company. We conduct [much of] our training on Zoom, so that when we do get a chance to see the other trainers in person a couple of times a year, it's fun for us to catch up with each other."

In addition to her ongoing CGJA volunteer work as a trainer, Lori also serves as a member of the Training Committee (and a member of their curriculum subcommittee), co-chair of the Annual Conference Committee, and in 2025 she was elected to the CGJA Board as a director from the southern region.

Since retiring from the University, Lori has found yet another volunteer calling by recently becoming a 'Certified Garden Master' (requiring six months of classwork study and a hands-on garden practicum), where she is now responsible for one of ten Ventura County Demonstration Gardens. "It's something that I really, really love," she says proudly. "My interest lies in helping people to grow food: we educate the public, help them with any problems they might have, and then they can take what they've learned back and apply it to their own gardens." In addition, Lori's own Demonstration Garden promotes the benefits of using California's native plants. "Many parts of Ventura County are 'high fire danger' areas," Lori notes, "and many California native plants are actually fire-retardant, and thus able to help protect homes against fire. Plus, their natural drought-resistance saves water – they can make a huge difference!"

Would Lori recommend volunteering to her fellow CGJA members? "Absolutely!," she answers without hesitation. "You know, volunteering really makes your life more fulfilling. It doesn't matter what you do, because there's always tons of opportunities to volunteer – and there's *always* something in your areas of expertise and interest. Even if you do it only a few times a year, you're still making a difference."

"With every volunteer experience I've ever had," Lori Macdonald concludes, "I've always said that I walked away with more than I ever gave."

Building Connections: The Role of the Chapter Liaison by Sharon DeBenedetti

A Connection Between Chapters and CGJA

The chapter liaison serves as a primary connection between the Chapter Relations Subcommittee (CRS) and the chapters. The purpose is simple: to build relationships, maintain communication, provide support, and help Chapters take advantage of the information and resources available through CGJA.

No two chapters are exactly alike. Each has its own history, leadership, membership, activities, priorities, and relationship with its local superior court and civil grand jury. Some chapters are well established and very active; others may be rebuilding membership, developing new programs, or working to strengthen relationships within their counties, while others may struggle due to unfortunate circumstances with their superior court or civil grand jury.

The liaison begins by getting to know the chapter, its people, its activities, what is working well, and where it may be encountering challenges.

Communication Goes Both Ways

An important part of the liaison program is maintaining regular communication throughout the year. A liaison may share information about CGJA programs, resources, meetings, activities, and opportunities that could benefit a chapter. When a chapter has a question or needs assistance, the liaison can help locate information or connect chapter leaders with someone within CGJA who has the appropriate knowledge or experience.

But communication works in both directions.

Liaisons also bring chapter experiences back to the Chapter Relations Subcommittee. Successes, concerns, new ideas, and emerging needs can help CRS better understand what is happening within chapters throughout California.

Sometimes a challenge facing one chapter is also being experienced by several others. Likewise, a successful program developed by one chapter may provide an idea that could benefit chapters elsewhere. By recognizing these connections, liaisons can help chapters learn from one another and share successful practices.

A Resource, Not a Supervisor

One of the most important principles of the program is understanding what the liaison role is and what it is not. A liaison does not supervise a chapter or direct its day-to-day activities. Chapters have their own leadership, membership, priorities, and local relationships and are responsible for conducting their activities consistent with CGJA policies, standards, and the requirements of chapter affiliation. Instead, the liaison serves as a resource, connector, listener, and supportive partner.

A chapter should feel comfortable contacting its liaison when it has a question, encounters a challenge, needs help locating a resource, has an idea or accomplishment to share, or simply wants to keep CGJA informed about what is happening locally.

And the liaison is not expected to have every answer. Often, the most valuable assistance a liaison can provide is knowing where to find the answer or connecting the chapter with the person, committee, or resource that can help.

Respecting Local Relationships

Many chapters have developed important relationships with their local superior courts. With court approval, chapters may assist with recruitment of prospective civil grand jurors and, in some counties, provide appropriate non-investigative procedural support to the sitting civil grand jury.

These relationships vary considerably from county to county. The liaison respects those differences as well as the responsibilities and authority of the superior court and the independence and confidentiality of the civil grand jury.

The goal is not to interfere with these local relationships, but to support chapters when assistance is requested and to share experiences and resources that may help strengthen their efforts.

Strengthening Our Chapter Community

Ultimately, the Chapter Liaison Program is about relationships.

When communication is regular and chapters know whom to contact, it becomes easier to share ideas, identify resources, address challenges, celebrate accomplishments, and learn from one another.

The success of the program does not depend upon how many questions a liaison answers or how often a chapter needs assistance. It depends upon establishing a relationship based on trust, communication, respect, accessibility, and collaboration.

Through those relationships, chapters remain connected not only to CGJA, but also to one another; strengthening the broader community of former civil grand jurors working throughout California.

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Board actions

8-25-26

Approved the Modoc County Chapter's application for affiliation.

09-22-26

Approved \$500 for Volunteer Awards for ten or more years of service.

Approved the budget, location, and dates for the 2027 Annual Conference, and authorized the CGJA President to sign the contract with the Embassy Suites, San Francisco Airport - Waterfront hotel.

Accepted and approved all electees to the CGJA Board.

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Former Grand Jurors' Statement

Summarize

[By 25-26 Former Grand Jury](#) Published Sep 9, 2026 1:06 pm Updated Sep 9, 2026 3:18 pm

We proudly served as volunteer members of the 2025–26 Tuolumne County Grand Jury. Our service has ended, and we now speak solely as private citizens and for ourselves. Everything discussed here comes from the Grand Jury's published reports, public County records, or open meetings of the Board of Supervisors.

After watching the Board discuss and respond to the Grand Jury reports on September 1st, we believe the public deserves to understand how a Grand Jury is required to work.

The Grand Jury is selected by the Superior Court and consists of ordinary citizens from different political viewpoints, age groups, and walks of life. Last year's jurors included a pastor, small-business owners, a stay-at-home parent, a military veteran, a multinational company COO, a law student, a search-and-rescue volunteer, a master gardener, a retired banker, and others.

Grand Jurors are instructed to corroborate facts rather than rely on unverified allegations. California law requires the concurrence of at least 12 jurors before a final report may be issued. Whatever anyone thinks of the conclusions, these reports cannot reasonably be dismissed as the work of one disgruntled juror or a small faction.

The County's responses claim that certain officials were targeted. The published reports do not support that characterization. Supervisor Brandon was quoted for something he said publicly. The reports identify facts and public records concerning Supervisor Holland. Statements concerning CAO Root relate to things he said or did publicly in his official role.

Sometimes facts are uncomfortable. That does not make them personal attacks.

Civil Grand Jury reports undergo legal and judicial review before publication. Although that does not mean the reviewers endorse every conclusion, it is part of the required process.

The reports did not order the County to do anything. They presented facts, made findings, and offered recommendations. When an agency states that a recommendation will be implemented in the future, California law requires its response to include a timeframe. Proposing a timeframe is not claiming authority to issue an enforceable order. Without one, the public cannot know whether a promised action was completed or quietly abandoned.

That is accountability.

The County's responses were unnecessarily aggressive and adversarial. The message seemed to be: "The Grand Jury asked questions we did not like, and we are going to explain why they had no business asking them." Disagreement is part of government, but attacking the investigators' credibility or dismissing the process does not address the substance of their findings.

Sixteen citizens devoted months of their lives to investigating issues affecting this community. Their reports went through the required review process and were published for the public to evaluate. People may disagree with the conclusions, but disagreement is not evidence that the investigation was unfair.

After limited discussion of three reports, the Board voted 3-2 to approve every response exactly as written.

That vote raises serious concerns about the appearance of impartiality. Supervisor Holland said he believed he had been personally targeted, yet participated in the decision and voted with the majority to approve the responses exactly as written. Those concerns are especially significant because recommendations involving his project could require costs to be borne by the property owner.

The meeting also revealed that County officials met separately with Supervisor Holland to review the responses concerning his project before presenting them to the full Board. Other supervisors questioned why they were not given the same opportunity.

The Grand Jury gave this County its time, energy, and best effort. Its members were not perfect, no group of citizens is, but we took our responsibility seriously. We wish the Board had responded with the same seriousness and respect.

The Grand Jury is not the enemy of County government. It is the citizens' watchdog – Tuolumne County residents helping their government do better.

Respectfully,

Jessica Cox
Nancy White
Nyssa Rodriguez
Luis Alecio
Annie Dean
Sabrina Biehl
Geoffrey Smith
Trinity Baughn
Kathleen Butler
Morgan Vaughn
Sean Losik
Lori Simaz
Martin Nash

Former members of the 2025–26 Tuolumne County Grand Jury, signing solely in our individual capacities as private citizens.

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