

FOREWORD

Just what is the Grand Jury, who are its members, and what are their functions? William J. Shaw and Noah Weinstein in their article, Grand Jury Reports – A Safeguard of Democracy, describe a Grand Jury as “a short-lived, representative, non-political body of citizens functioning without hope of personal aggrandizement. It [the Grand Jury] comes from the citizens at large and soon disappears into anonymity without individual recognition or personal reward.” In El Dorado County this is a group of 19 citizens who have the ability, time and willingness to serve the citizens of the County for a period of one year.

The requirements for service are basic and designed to allow and encourage maximum participation by the County’s citizens. A juror must be 18 years old, a United States citizen, and a resident of El Dorado County for at least one-year on the date they are sworn to service. The candidate for juror must also possess natural faculties of ordinary intelligence, sound judgment, and fair character.

Service on the Grand Jury is an act of citizenship. Individuals selected for the Grand Jury should expect to work a minimum of three six-hour days per week throughout their year of service. Remuneration for service was paid at the rate of \$15.00 for those days actually worked. Mileage driven for grand jury business is currently reimbursed at the rate paid to all county employees.

The Grand Jury essentially serves as the agency of civilian oversight for our local government. The common public perception of the Grand Jury is a body taking testimony and handing down Criminal Indictments. In reality, the principal functions of the Grand Jury are civil in nature. Some duties, such as the inspections of public prisons, are required by law to be performed on a yearly basis. The majority of the Grand Jury’s inquiries, however, are the result of its own internal direction. Generally, the Grand Jury audits local government processes, expenditures, and the actions of its officials. Practically speaking, a grand jury primarily responds to complaints brought to it by citizens of the County, to issues of concern and public debate as publicized in the local media, and to other issues exposed during the investigation of complaints.

During the course of its inquiries, members of the Grand Jury not only will find conditions and practices within government that deserve recommendations for improvement, they also will encounter examples of excellent service performed by units or persons in local government. Grand Juries by their very design are intended to identify and recommend improvement of deficiencies within government; as such, reports of the Grand Jury tend to be viewed as negative in nature. It would be unfair, however, for the Report of the Grand Jury to focus on the negative without recognizing outstanding performance within government. In that light, this Report also contains commendations for those persons, encountered by members of the Grand Jury, who were noted to have performed exemplary service for the County.

At the conclusion of its investigations the Grand Jury may issue an indictment, an accusation, and/or a report. The year-end Report of the Grand Jury is a compilation of investigative reports complete with recommendations for change that are intended to improve the operations of government and so better serve the citizens of this County. Grand Juries have no power to impose their recommendations on local government. Grand Juries cannot enforce their recommendations; they merely have the ability to “shine a light” on the facts uncovered by their inquiries, thus bringing matters to the public’s attention. The Report then provides a vehicle for public debate. It is a matter for the public to decide whether the recommendations of the Grand Jury are appropriate, and whether actions taken by government officials in response to those recommendations are themselves appropriate. Ultimately, the citizens of the County carry out their role in this process, by expressing their judgment on the issues at the ballot box.

Richard J. Brunner, Foreman
2002/2003 Grand Jury

To Obtain an Application

Any interested citizen who meets the required qualifications and is able to make the time commitment may request an application for appointment to the Grand Jury from the Staff Court Secretary at the following location:

Superior Courthouse
495 Main Street
Placerville, California 95667
(530) 621-6451