

NEWS RELEASE

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ORANGE COUNTY GRAND JURY

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THE GRAND JURY RECOMMENDS AN INDEPENDENT OVERSIGHT BODY TO ENHANCE PUBLIC TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND REDUCE CORRUPT AND UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

Santa Ana, California--- The 2012/13 Orange County Grand Jury today released a report studying the history of corruption in local government and advocated the creation of a Blue Ribbon Commission to study ethics oversight programs. The Grand Jury asked that the Blue Ribbon Commission report its findings with recommendations to the Board of Supervisors within 12 months.

The Grand Jury strongly believes that there is a correlation between public trust and good governance. Orange County has a long history of ethical violations at all levels of local government – the County, cities, special districts and joint powers authorities. Public officials were convicted on charges of bribery, conspiracy, fraud, campaign finance violations and obstruction of justice. In cases where conduct did not rise to the level of criminal prosecution, the appearance of impropriety was equally damaging to the public trust.

The scope of the Grand Jury report is limited to the County of Orange. Important to note is that this 2012-2013 Grand Jury Report on Ethics by its nature is not intended to be all-inclusive. Rather, the goal is two-pronged: 1) to provide an historical retrospective of ethical violations; and 2) to perhaps lay the foundation for future Grand Jury studies on the subject of ethics and corruption in Orange County government. Sadly, it is the Grand Jury's hypothesis that untoward behavior continues and is actively festering in today's political environment. In point of fact, this and several other studies conducted by the 2012-2013 Grand Jury address the fact that corruption has permeated all levels of the organization, and does not apply only to elected officials positioned visibly in the public eye.

The goal of the Grand Jury's recommendations is to enhance public trust in government and to prevent unethical conduct before it happens. This can be accomplished by an independent oversight body that recommends ethics ordinances, provides advice and training to officials, maintains a Whistleblower Hotline, enforces violations of ethics laws and issues annual reports available to the public.

The Grand Jury report, including Findings/Conclusions and Recommendations, can be found on the Orange County Grand Jury's website, www.ocgrandjury.org. This report will also be included as part of the Final Report of the 2012-2013 Grand Jury, to be published later this year.

2012-2013 Orange County Grand Jury

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ray Garcia".

Raymond Garcia, Foreman