



Grand Jurors Association of Orange County



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Sept. 9, 2019

At our luncheon of Sept. 5, 2019, we were fortunate to have Special Agent Frederick Simon of the Federal Bureau of Investigation as our guest. His presentation was well received by those in attendance. Our luncheon attendance is on the increase and much of that is directly related to the quality of the speakers we have had, as well as the related efforts of your board. Your board members are providing considerable service and interest in keeping our association current and viable and I know that their efforts are much appreciated.

I was particularly pleased to see new members in attendance, both from the 2018-2019 panel and the current panel. Having them participate is a reminder to all of us that we continue to be an important organization and that we need to stay engaged. As membership chairman, Alf Lyle, along with Mike Morris, has done a masterful job of keeping track of our membership and encouraging attendance at our quarterly luncheons. As I mentioned at the latest luncheon, if you are not receiving our periodic messages and notices, send Alf or Mike an e-mail and make sure your contact information is current.

Your Measure M committee (Bill Underwood) continues to provide services to "GJAOC OC GO" which is the Measure M Taxpayer Oversight Committee for the Orange County Transit Authority. He has done so with the assistance of John Moohr, Sandy Dunkin, Robin Bowen, and Bette Flick. This has been a valuable assist to the taxpayers of Orange County and the OCTA itself, and represents the real value that we have to offer. Our reputation for impartiality and credibility is of great value in this endeavor. As I am sure you are aware, our Association provides this service on a "contract basis" with the fees servicing our Associations needs.

Our Speakers Bureau, chaired by Sandy Dunkin, continues with the development of a number of new ideas including a GJAOC facebook page, (which we hope to have operational by January, 2020), new and improved presentation materials, as well as coordinating efforts at future recruitment assisting the administrative staff of the Orange County Superior Court, and the sitting panel's Recruitment and Orientation Committee.

The Courts are as concerned as are we all as to the ever increasing difficulties in recruitment, not only for the Grand Jury but for actual trial juries as well. In recent discussions it has been relayed to us that there is concern in the judiciary on a statewide level, as to the lack of understanding by the general populace as to our legal systems, as well as the rights and obligations of our citizens. We hope to learn more about this at the state wide conference in November.

As I have mentioned in the past, the courts have started an "outreach" program of public education where students as well as others, are being brought into the court houses of Orange County for purposes of providing them with an educational experience.

This concern has also reached into the halls of local governments and they too are attempting to build programs which improve the concepts of civic responsibility. We, as an organization, have pledged our support for these programs and will continue to offer whatever assistance we can. I believe that the relationship between our association, the courts, and the offices of government is moving in the right direction

The concept of "Continuity" remains an area of interest for us and our committee chaired by Diana Merryman. We have reached out to the current Grand Jury panel and offered our assistance in any manner they seem appropriate as to their understanding of the ways and means used to generate the

ultimate report. In addition to any service we can be to the continuity committee of the current Grand Jury, we also hope to review those matters that become public knowledge through the responses posted to the court's Grand Jury section of their website.

This is intended to be an honest evaluation of the responses to previous reports. If a particular respondent has complied with the recommendations, as most do, and for some, who have gone above and beyond, we are of the opinion that attention should be brought to that success story. This will go a long way in promoting the idea that the Grand Jury reports are meaningful and well intentioned.

The voice of the GJAOC must be heard in a positive way. If we see good programs, good ideas, and good conduct, we should not be hesitant to point them out, to encourage and congratulate those who contribute to the greater good. Those comments made for former Board of Supervisor Bill Steiner at the recent luncheon is the perfect example.

Over the years, many of our operating documents became outdated or somewhat less than meaningful. Dave Chapel, along with the support of committee members, has completely redrafted our bylaws and is bringing them into conformity with our actual practices, a Herculean job. During that process, Dave suggested and we all agreed that we must now also direct our attention to the modernization of our associations' aims and goals. It is critically important for our group to have a written understanding of where we are and where we need to go in the future. What is it we want to accomplish? What areas of concern do we have? How can we organize our association so as to have a positive effect on those goals? How do we make our association more meaningful to each other...and to our community as a whole?

These are serious questions that any organization, public or private, must have as guidelines to their continuing operations. And that's where you come in.

I'm asking that each of you give this some serious thought and come up with an idea or two as to the answers to those questions and to drop us an e-mail as to your conclusions. These e-mails can be returned to me, or to any board member, should you be so inclined, and those thoughts will be consolidated into a statement of our aims and goals. This is more important than one might initially think, not just from an assist in our organizational efforts, but as assurance to others, letting them know of our respectful purposes. It needn't be some written essay, but just a comment or two about your thoughts as to where we have been, and where we need to go.

Personally, I find many things on a day to day basis that I find troubling about our current governmental and bureaucratic affairs. I am concerned about those things that I believe are counterproductive to our beliefs and institutions. Our role as a civic minded organization should not be fearful of making our concerns known. I am not talking about politics. I am talking about honesty, integrity, loyalty, and fiduciary duty. As an organization, do we stand for these ideals? If so we should say so.

It would do great damage to our organization should we cross over the line into political rancor, and "politics" is the "third rail" as to the effectiveness of our association. But, that does allow that we be community leaders by accentuating the positive.

Finally, (and thank you for your patience those of you who have made it this far), there is periodic "backroom" talk in certain quarters suggesting the Grand Jury system has outlived its usefulness and should be relegated to the dustbin of history. If we are accomplishing nothing, or very little, that argument will become louder. Those few of us who can honestly say, "Been there, done that", know how wrong such a decision would be.

Any and all return comments are welcomed, and no, I do not get paid by the word. Thank you for membership, your attendance at our luncheons, and any support you can give to our very hard working board members. (and wear your service pin with pride.)

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