



June 10, 2020

To the Membership of the Grand Jurors' Association of Orange County

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

It's time for an update as to what is, and is not, happening within our organization. I am sure we are all a little tired of "prairie dogging", i.e. sticking our head up every once in a while to gauge current circumstances. Hopefully, you have all been careful and have jealously guarded your health and that of your loved ones. As well, we can begin to anticipate the return to some level of normalcy and stability.

Until that time, a short "state of the association" would seem to be in order. The board has not been conducting regular "in person" meetings for obvious reasons, however, most of the board members are in regular communication by telephone and e-mail. We are hopeful that we can begin regular board meetings in the near future and because of our limited number, should be able to practice social distancing. Such may not be the case with the quarterly luncheons where social distancing is a considerably greater issue. The board is acutely aware of the medically related challenges which are presented to those members who may be at a greater risk than others.

As a pandemic consequence, our recruitment efforts for Grand Jury applications have been greatly reduced and limited to the distribution of some written materials. Our association's financial condition remains quite constant, all things considered, and the financials are reported in our minutes, which along with other information can be found on our website.

Our Measure M committee, capably chaired by Bill Underwood, has continued to conduct the process for the selection of the OCTA oversight review members. This very important function is a feather in our hat, generates a few dollars in our budget, and most importantly is an example of what our organization is capable of accomplishing. Many kudos to Bill and the members of his committee for their extraordinary efforts.

As you can imagine, the Covid 19 restrictions have had a very significant effect on the present sitting Grand Jury panel and I am sure we will learn more about what they have had to endure as time passes. Equally problematic are the circumstances the Superior Court has been faced with including the increased difficulty associated with the selection process and the impaneling of the new 2020-2021 jury panel.

But there is some significant and welcome news in that regard. Judge Larsh has empowered a group of folks, along with court support staff to organize and arrange a more extensive orientation of the incoming panel. To that end they have been able to arrange funding for the

state training program and have contacted Foreperson Birgit Sale (2018-2019), who is now a member of the California Grand Jury Association's training program. The state association's training program is of high quality and very all encompassing and will be presented to the new grand jury panel during a two day session in late June.

In addition, the organizing group has also recommended a third day of training which is to concentrate on those matters particular to Orange County including the day to day mechanics of how the local panel works. While the state program will cover the vast majority of training, our association through some of its members will participate in the local aspect of the training.

Over the years, many members of our association have expressed the need for improvement in the training of incoming panels. Almost to a person, we have had the feeling of indecision that comes with the unfamiliarity of beginning a new endeavor. How many times have we heard the phrases "How do we do that?", or "Can we do that?". How much time and effort has been lost until we found our way?

I could not be more excited to see this development and appreciate the court's willingness to find the funding for such an important issue. It reflects an understanding on the court's part as to the importance of the Grand Jury. I suspect there will be many practical and organizational issues facing the incoming panel in light of the restrictions which have become the new norm. Now is the time to support them, the courts, and our other public entities as much as we possibly can. The court has obviously taken a giant step forward for the Grand Jury process and it is up to us to support this effort.

While the GJAOC will be able to return to normalcy at some future date, we must do so safely and we are doing our best in that regard and hope to inform you of those developments as we proceed. And, please do not be shy in letting the courts know of our appreciation of their recent support. As always, please contact myself, or any other board member with any questions you might have.

Stanley Ness, Pres.
GJAOC
sness2@cox.net