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The History of Grand Juries

Juries were first created under the law of Etherel II, who reigned during the Anglo-Saxon period of A.D. 978-1016. By AD 1368, Juries had evolved to include the Grand Jury, or Grand Inquest, formed by Edward III.

Most of us have heard the term, “Grand Jury”, but most of us have little knowledge of what a Grand Jury actually does.

The Grand Jury system in America began in 1635, becoming a full legal body with the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which states, “No person shall be held to answer for a capital or otherwise infamous crime unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces of in the Militia, when in actual service time of War, or public danger...”

The Grand Jury system has been in existence in California since 1879 when the State Constitution was adopted. Every county in California has at least one Grand Jury, and in some cases, larger counties have more than one. Santa Clara County, for example, has one Grand Jury that deals with civil issues, and another Grand Jury for criminal issues. On rare occasions, the Grand Jury may also handle Coroner Inquests.

Madera County has one Grand Jury handling both civil and criminal cases. In criminal cases, the Madera County Grand Jury is presented with evidence of a crime, and works together to determine if enough evidence exists to issue an indictment.

Most Grand Jury members are drawn from the regular petit jury pool. Letters are sent to a random group from the jury pool, and those responding with interest are invited to participate in an interview process. From this group, nineteen jurors and several alternates are selected, and are impaneled in July to serve for one year. The nineteen individuals impaneled as jurors make a commitment to do this important work that includes conducting investigations, writing reports on those investigations, attending meetings, and making recommendations.

Some Grand Jury investigations are triggered by public concerns. These complaints maybe brought to the Grand Jury through letters, phone calls, or email. These issues and concerns are then brought before the Grand Jury panel in order to determine if an investigation should be completed. All Grand Jury business is conducted in secret, and all information and discussions are considered highly confidential. This secrecy is required to:

- ...protect the innocent accused, who is exonerated by and through the investigation
- ...ensure the utmost freedom to the Grand Jury in its’ deliberations
- ...prevent subordination of perjury or tampering with witnesses
- ...encourage untrammelled disclosures by persons with information relevant to an investigation
- ...prevent the escape of those whose indictment may be contemplated



Superior Court of the State of California

County of Madera

Edward P. Moffat
Judge



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Madera, Ca 93637
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June 20, 2008

To: Residents of the County of Madera

Each year in July the County of Madera impanels a Grand Jury to examine and investigate the activities of government agencies. The Grand Jury is a part of the judicial branch of government but operates as a separate and independent body. The Madera County Grand Jury is selected at random from the trial court's list of qualified trial jurors.

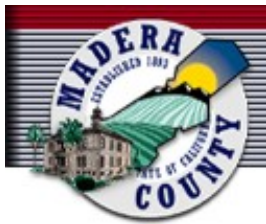
The 2007-2008 Grand Jurors served from July 2007 through June 2008. During their tenure in office the Grand Jury conducted numerous investigations and inquires into the operation of the state and local government. The 2007-2008 Grand Jury worked effectively and efficiently in addressing the concerns presented to them and offered reasoned recommendations addressing the issues presented to them.

I feel extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with such a group of dedicated citizens who gave freely of their time and their expertise. With the outstanding leadership of Foreperson Linda Dominguez this Grand Jury was able to accomplish their goal of providing service to the community of Madera and complying with their solemn duty to do their utmost in being conscientious, complete, and correct.

The 2007-2008 Grand Jury was diligent and performed their duties impartially. As citizens of Madera you should be very proud of what the Grand Jury accomplished as evidenced by the reports contained in this Final Report.

I want to personally thank each and every member of the 2007-2008 Madera Grand Jury for their selfless dedication to duties as Grand Jurors. You did excellent work for the citizens of Madera County and the Superior Court.

EDWARD P. MOFFAT
Supervising Judge
2007-2008 Madera Grand Jury



Madera County Grand Jury

Foreperson's Letter

June 30, 2008

Honorable Judge Edward P. Moffat
Supervising Judge of the Superior Court
State of California, County of Madera

Dear Judge Moffat:

It is an honor and a pleasure to present to you, in accordance with applicable California law, the 2007/2008 Madera County Grand Jury's final report. This report is an accumulation of reports issued throughout the Grand Jury year of July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2008.

The 2007/2008 Grand Jury accepted our duties by taking an oath on July 2, 2007; since then, all 19 members of this Grand Jury have diligently performed the required duties, while maintaining confidentiality and respect for all involved. Our commitment, objectivity, professionalism, and integrity helped ensure that the citizens of Madera County were being provided the most effective, efficient and responsive governmental services.

This Grand Jury would like to thank you for your tireless and continued support, guidance, and encouragement throughout our term of service. It has been our privilege to serve on this Grand Jury, and working together with you has made the experience especially rewarding.

Respectively submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Linda R. Dominguez".

Linda R. Dominguez
Foreperson
2007/2008 Madera County Grand Jury