

Introduction

Each year, nineteen jurors are selected through a combination of random processes and personal interviews to serve for one year, from July 1 through June 30, on the Santa Cruz County Grand Jury. These jurors are your neighbors, serving as independent watchdogs over local government on your behalf.

The grand jury concept dates back to the Norman conquest of England in the eleventh century. In the United States, the Massachusetts Bay Colony impaneled the first grand jury in about 1635 to consider instances of murder, robbery, and wife beating. Both the U. S. Constitution's Fifth Amendment and the California Constitution call for grand juries, and they were established throughout California during the early years of statehood. Now each of the 58 counties in this state impanels a grand jury.

Although most people think a grand jury only considers whether a crime has been committed and whether a certain person should be charged with that crime and required to stand trial, the grand jury in Santa Cruz County is an investigative body with three primary functions:

- the examination of all aspects of county government, city government, and special districts to ensure that those who govern are honest and efficient and that local government funds are being spent appropriately
- the investigation of complaints filed by citizens
- the inspection or investigation of the management and condition of all public prisons within the county

The grand jury submits a final report of its findings and recommendations before the end of its term to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court. Government officials and agencies to which the recommendations are directed are required to respond to the details in the report within 60 or 90 days. The report and the responses are available to the public at the grand jury web site and in the local libraries. However, while the reports are public, all investigations and interviews are kept secret, and the jury's records may not be inspected or subpoenaed.

Citizens may submit complaints directly to the grand jury requesting it to investigate what they perceive as mistreatment by officials or suspicions of governmental misconduct or inefficiencies. The jury is not a consumer complaint agency but uses complaints to identify policies and procedures that might need improvement. While the grand jury cannot investigate every complaint, each one is considered carefully and treated confidentially. The ultimate goal of the grand jury is to improve government in the county and to make public officials responsive to the people.

Additional information about the grand jury, and complaint forms, are available at the address and web site below:

Santa Cruz County Grand Jury
701 Ocean Street, Room 318-I
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Telephone 831-454-2099 Fax 831-454-3387

e-mail grandjury@co.santa-cruz.ca.us

web site <http://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/grandjury>