

Ventura Community College Governing Board

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

The 1995-96 Grand Jury received a citizen's complaint, 96-51, alleging a possible violation of the Brown Act by the Ventura County Community College District Board of Trustees. In addition, concerns were raised regarding the decision to decentralize the District's financial organization, giving back control of funds to individual college presidents.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

- The Grand Jury conducted a preliminary inquiry to determine if the matter should be turned over to law enforcement to investigate.
- Met with complainant and took sworn testimony regarding allegations/concerns about a special meeting called by the Board of Trustees, and the concerns relating to organizational decisions.
- Took sworn testimony from a member of the Board of Trustees.
- Consulted the Government Code 54950.1 relating to the regulations imposed by the Brown Act.
- Collected documents related to the special meeting. These included dated material on the notification of the meeting, mailing list of recipients, meeting agenda and notes from office personnel involved.
- Met with the Chancellor of the Ventura County Community Colleges regarding the special meeting and the decision relating to decentralization of the District's financial organization.

FINDINGS

"Under the (Brown) Act, a local body may call a special meeting by providing notice 24 hours in advance of the meeting to all of the legislative body members and to all media outlets who have requested notification."

Sworn testimony, dated documents which included notification of the meeting, the mailing list of recipients and the agenda, indicated that the meeting had been properly publicized by being posted, and notification had been given in writing, by fax and by telephone. In addition, campus police were notified to place a copy of the agenda in the campus mail box for the Associated Student Body at each college; and the college newspapers each received a copy of the agenda in their mailboxes. The agenda of the Board of Trustees meeting was taped to the front window of the District Administration Center at 71 Day Road in Ventura. All communications and notices were released at least 24 hours prior to the special meeting.

After properly publicizing a meeting, the Board of Trustees has the right to go into closed session when a personnel matter is to be considered. The reasons regarding the non-renewal of a contract for re-employment of college personnel is a matter which is confidential to the Board and the employee involved, and these records are not available.

The decision to decentralize the District's financial organization and give individual college presidents more control of their allocated funds contained checks and balances to assure accountability and required that presidents report directly to the Chancellor.

CONCLUSION

The 1995-96 Grand Jury has inquired into the concerns that were within its purview and determined that it would take no further action.