

VENTURA COUNTY GRAND JURY




Final Report 1998-1999


The Ventura County Grand Jury is an independent investigative body whose primary function is investigating and reporting on all governmental bodies within the county. Its powers and duties include bringing indictments for criminal or public offenses and being responsive to citizens' complaints.

The Grand Jury is directed to prepare and issue a final report in accordance with Penal Code Section 933 and must include suggested means for resolution of problems identified under Penal Code Section 916.

The 1998-1999 Grand Jury finds it interesting that we are still reviewing areas of the County Government that were reviewed 100 years ago!



THE STAR
SUNDAY MARCH 28, 1999



VENTURA COUNTY
100 YEARS AGO

Excerpts from the Ventura Free Press, 1899

◆

Editor's note: This weekly column features excerpts from the forerunner of the Ventura County Star. Some excerpts might contain language that is considered offensive today, but is included for historical accuracy.

VENTURA FREE PRESS, FRIDAY, MARCH 24, 1899:

From the front page:

NEWS OF THE WEEK.
From the Grand Jury Report.

We find that the Hospital is kept in a neat manner inside and out, and no complaints from inmates. The grounds, toilet rooms, stable and outside wards are all in good order and we recommend that a coat of good paint be applied to the front of the main building, put on by the day and not by contract as contract paint does not seem to be durable.

We find the county jail all right with a few exceptions. The prisoners seem to be well fed and taken care of, but we find it very cold in the iron tanks with no means provided for heating them.

The Sheriff informs us that the water comes into the basement in front through the walls and floor when it rains. The wards for the insane prisoners are nicely padded and in good order.

The Court House we find in good order with a few exceptions, and we are gratified to say that the county officials are not inclined to ask for anything new this dry season, excepting on account of the ladies employed they suggest and we recommend that the toilet closet at the end of the stairs be prepared for the use of ladies exclusively, and that a sign be placed upon the door designating it as such.

Reprinted with the permission of The Star

“The more things change the more they stay the same.”



CHARLES W. CAMPBELL
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
January 1, 1998 - December 31, 1999

county of ventura

Grand Jury
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009
(805) 654-2873

Honorable Charles W. Campbell, Presiding Judge
Ventura County Superior Court
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, California 93009

Honorable Judge Campbell,

I am pleased to present to you the final report of the 1998/1999 Grand Jury.

This document represents the collective effort of each and every one of the nineteen members of the Grand Jury panel. The panel, divided into committees and sub-committees, spent many hours investigating each of the issues noted and has to the best of its ability presented a fair and unbiased view of the subjects discussed.

We readily acknowledge that some readers and some of the agencies investigated may not be pleased with our critical reviews. We, do however, sincerely hope that each will consider the criticisms in the constructive light in which they are intended.

I feel that the County has been well served by this panel and I thank the court for giving me the opportunity to serve as its foreman.

Sincerely,



Marvin J. Reeber
Foreman, 1998/1999 Ventura County Grand Jury

Foreman's Statement

It has been a great honor and pleasure to serve as the foreman of the 1998-1999 Ventura County Grand Jury. I have been privileged to serve with eighteen dedicated, hardworking, intelligent and resourceful citizens of our county. The Grand Jury panel was composed of people of different ages, different educational and occupational experiences and different life experiences in general. This diversity has contributed greatly to the success of the panel.

In Ventura County, the Grand Jury has a dual responsibility. One area is dealing with the criminal investigative and indictment procedures. The other major area of responsibility deals with civil oversight. Most of our work during this term has been in this latter area.

The Grand Jury is designed to be a watchdog agency as well as the conscience of the community. Justice Louis Brandeis has said, "sunlight is the best antiseptic." It is in this spirit that this Grand Jury has spent a great deal of time and energy attempting to reflect sunlight into the dark crevices of governmental organizations within the county. It is with our legislated mandate in mind that we have sought to uncover any inefficiencies, malfeasance, or unethical behavior which may be present in the various governmental bodies within the county and if anything untoward is found, we have the responsibility to recommend corrective actions. I believe that, considering the constraints of time, personnel and funding, this Grand Jury has been very effective in carrying out this mandate.

Even though our county is a wonderful place to live, we have not yet arrived at a state of perfection. There is still much to be done. While honest people can certainly disagree with solutions to problems, one would be hard pressed not to agree that the problems, as outlined, do exist. Highlighted in this report are some of the problem areas uncovered as well as recommended solutions to these problems. While these may not be the only problems that exist nor the only solutions available to solve these problems, great significance can be attached to the fact that it is through the Grand Jury process and this report that these problems are exposed. The ultimate solution, in some cases, may be arrived at only through a consensus of the public at large.

I am pleased to report that, for the most part, we found that our county is staffed by hardworking, honest, dedicated individuals who, in some cases, are working under very difficult conditions. We did find that the complexity of county government, including the structure of the many special districts and commissions as well as the complexity of the budgeting process, serve to reduce the efficiency and cost effectiveness of county operations. These matters are addressed in greater detail elsewhere in this Grand Jury Report.

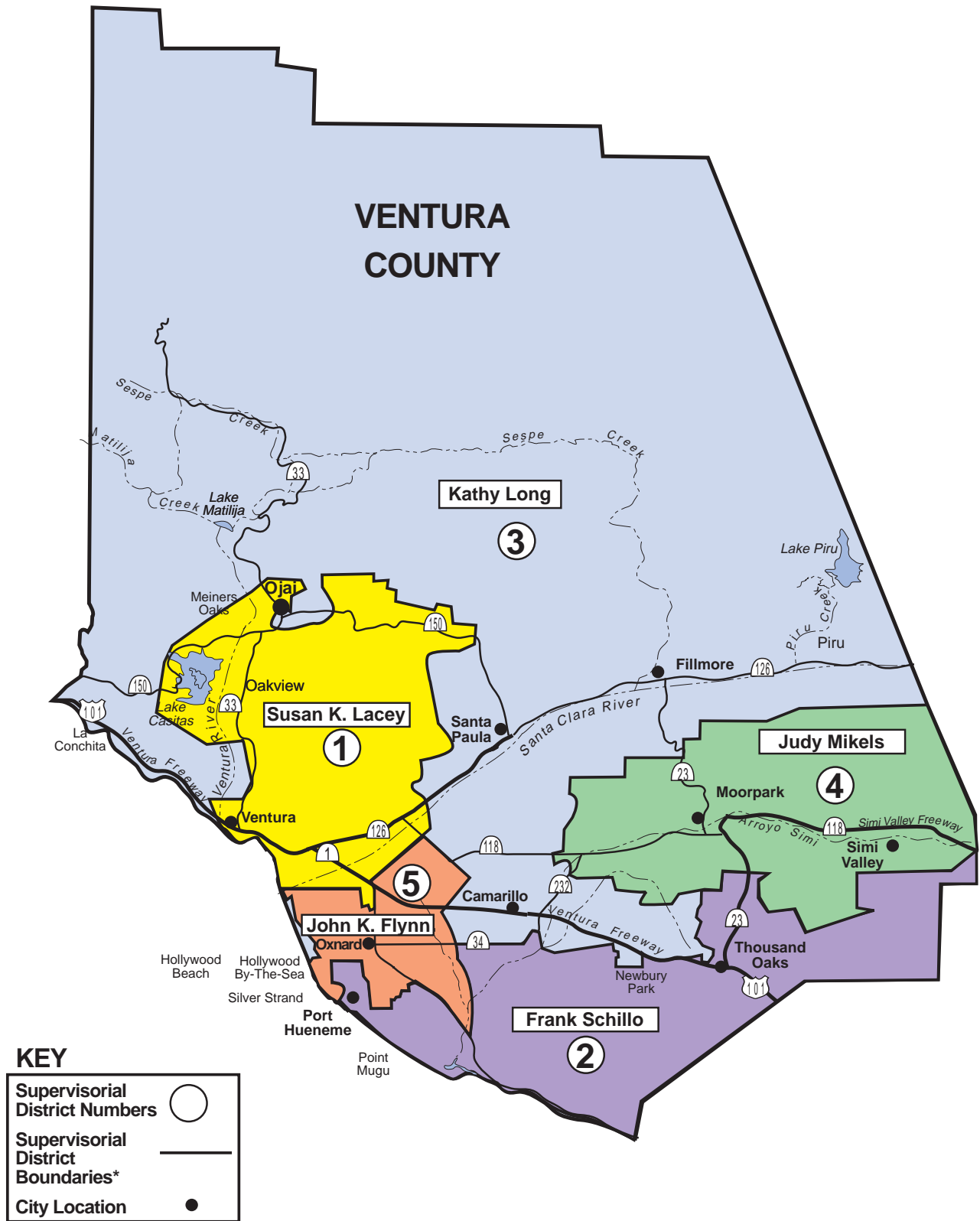
This Grand Jury has taken steps to update and improve the current Grand Jury manual as well as providing the incoming Grand Jury with a number of computer templates and forms, which should make their transition somewhat easier. Additionally, there are other areas of investigation that, due to a lack of time and resources, we were unable to pursue. We are hopeful that the incoming Grand Jury might examine some of them.



Back Row left to right; Mike Lastrico, Jerry Lewi, Mike Cogan, Tom Harders, Magnus Studer, Hector Nava, Sr., Ira Grooms, Dave Jacobson, Jan Small, Bob Cruickshank, Larry Banke, Charles Tennant
Seated left to right; Kris Ambarian, Joyce Overbaugh, Larry Lowenberg, Marv Reeber (Foreman), Barbara Christiansen, Lillian Goldstein, Janice Kuzemko

1998 - 1999 Ventura County Grand Jury

Kristina Ambarian Indictment Secretary	Fillmore	District 3
Larry Banke Librarian	Camarillo	District 3
Barbara Christiansen Recording Secretary <i>Pro Tem</i>	Simi Valley	District 4
Michael Cogan Sergeant-at-Arms	Camarillo	District 3
Robert Cruickshank	Thousand Oaks	District 2
Lillian Goldstein	Ventura	District 1
Ira Grooms Treasurer <i>Pro Tem</i>	Somis	District 4
Thomas Harders	Simi Valley	District 4
Ralph David Jacobson	Thousand Oaks	District 2
Janice Kuzemko Corresponding Secretary	Ventura	District 1
Mike Lastrico	Oxnard	District 5
Jerry Lewi Parliamentarian Indictment Secretary <i>Pro Tem</i>	Thousand Oaks	District 2
Larry Lowenberg Foreman <i>Pro Tem</i>	Ventura	District 1
Hector Nava, Sr. Sergeant-at-Arms	El Rio	District 5
Joyce Overbaugh Recording Secretary	Oak View	District 1
Marvin J. Reeber Foreman	Oxnard	District 5
Myrle Jan Small	Ventura	District 1
Magnus Studer	Ojai	District 1
Charles Tennant Treasurer	Westlake Village	District 2
<i>Also Served</i>		
Stella Spray	Oxnard	District 5



GJ4083-2/97

SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS IN VENTURA COUNTY

AREAS OF INTEREST / SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

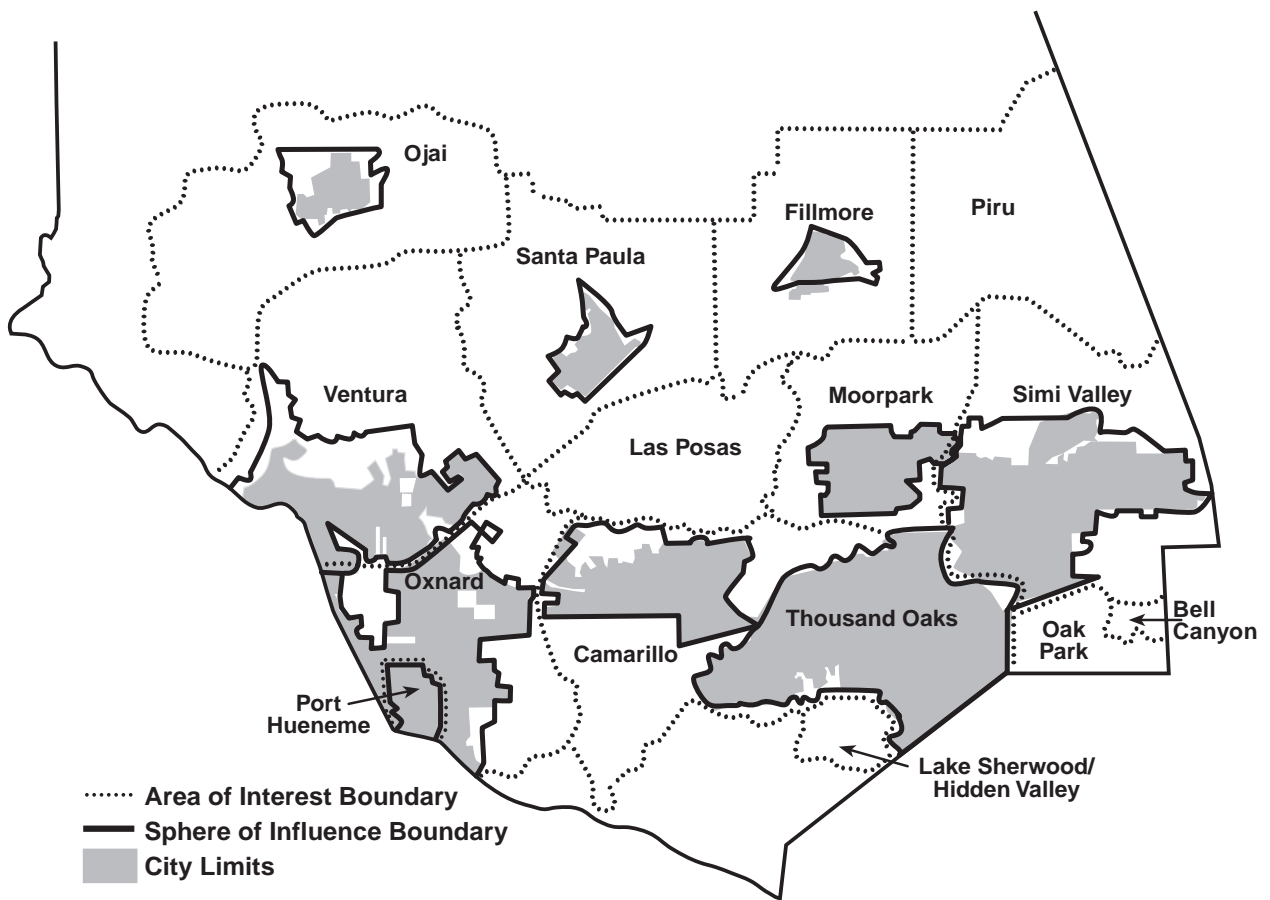


Table of Contents

Statement of Grand Jury Purpose and Function i
 Historical Note ii
 Picture of Presiding Judge iii
 Letter of Transmittal to Presiding Judge iv
 Foreman’s Statement v
 Photograph of 1998-1999 Ventura County Grand Jury vii
 Members of 1998-1999 Ventura County Grand Jury viii
 Supervisorial Districts Map ix
 Areas of Interest/Spheres of Influence Map x
 Table of Contents xiii

Audit, Finance and County Administration

Audit, Finance and County Administration
 Committee Summary 1
 Cable TV Public Access & Televising of Public Meetings 3
 Responses to Report 7
 Year 2000 Computer Problem 12
 Responses to Report 28
 The Ventura County Adopted Budget Book Review 32
 Ventura County Transportation Commission & its Role in Public Transit 59

Cities and Joint Powers

Cities and Joint Powers Committee Summary 73
 City of Oxnard Hiring Practices 75
 Response to Report 78
 Implementation of Mello-Roos funding for Construction
 of the Janss Marketplace Parking Structure 80
 Response to Report 85
 Improprieties in the Planning and Approval of Development Projects
 within the City of Oxnard 87
 Ventura County Cities Labor Relations 90

County Services and Special Districts

County Services & Special Districts Committee Summary	93
Combining Agricultural Commissioner's Office with Weights and Measures.....	95
Special Districts	106
Response to Report	122
Ventura County Harbor Department.....	123

Health, Education and Welfare

Health, Education and Welfare Committee Summary	127
Human Services Agency	129
School Safety in Ventura County Public Schools	135

Law, Justice and Public Safety Committee

Law, Justice and Public Safety Committee Summary	165
Adult Detention Facilities	167
Response to Report	175
Review of Evacuation Plan for Hall of Justice	176
Inadequacies of the Juvenile Justice Buildings and Need for new Juvenile Justice Center in Ventura County	180
Pay Parity Comparison.....	188
Other Committee Activities.....	209

Other Grand Jury Activities

Community Relations Committee	215
Complaint Review Committee	216
Grand Jury Review Committee	217
Indictment/Investigation Summary	218

Appendices

Appendix I:	
Legal Requirements for Responses	221
Appendix II:	
Responses to 1997-1998 Grand Jury Report	222
Appendix III:	
Response Summary, 1998-1999 Grand Jury Reports	226
Appendix IV:	
Index to Final Grand Jury Reports Summary, 1989-90 to 1997-98	228