

**BELL CANYON  
COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT**

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June 29, 1999

Ventura County Grand Jury  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93003

**Re: 1998-1999 Ventura County Grand Jury  
Interim Final Report**

Dear Members of the Grand Jury:

The Board of Directors for the Bell Canyon Community Services District has reviewed the 1998-1999 Ventura County Grand Jury Interim Final Report concerning special districts. Included within your report is your surprising and baffling recommendation to eliminate the Bell Canyon Community Services District and "replace it with private contracting." The Grand Jury's recommendation was formulated without even cursory contact with the District, is based on outdated information, and is inaccurate in several fundamental respects. Accordingly, the recommendation lacks even minimal credibility.

Our specific comments are as follows:

1. During its "study" of the District, the Grand Jury inexplicably never even contacted the District, either to visit the District or request information concerning current District Operations. The Grand Jury recklessly released the report publicly without even asking for basic information from the District, much less comments prior to release. Aside from the fact that the Grand Jury violated its own principal statutory provisions -- Government Code § 933.05(f) -- by failing to provide the report to the District in advance of public release, common courtesy as well as a desire to get the facts straight should have compelled the Grand Jury to ask for some basic information first. We note that the Grand Jury's recommendation concerning the District is, by the report's own admission, "not supported by detailed studies..." Given the facts pointed out in this letter, the Grand Jury's recommendation is not supported by even minimal studies.

2. If the Grand Jury had bothered to check, it would have discovered that the 1993 LAFCO Report ("Study of Special Districts in Ventura County"), utilized as a "major source document" by the Grand Jury, is seriously outdated with respect to the District, and that the District is not a "single operation" district (for trash collection) that the report implies.

In fact, the District is multifaceted and provides significant services to Bell Canyon residents. For example, in 1996 the District successfully negotiated with the Los Angeles City Fire Department to provide Advance Life Support paramedic services to Bell Canyon.

In addition, the District, through contracting with the Ventura County Sheriff's Department, funds and provides additional traffic patrol and vehicle code enforcement within the District. The District also provides funding for community recreation, e.g., new trail development, and has actively pursued implementation of disaster assistance response teams for the benefit of its residents. All of these activities and functions are within the District's basic jurisdictional responsibilities outlined in Government Code § 61600, part of the Community Services District Law.<sup>1</sup>

3. The most astonishing aspect of the recommendation, to replace the District's trash collection services with "private contracting," is that the District has always successfully provided this service to its residents through contracting with a private company, presently Las Virgenes Disposal. A simple phone call to the District by the Grand Jury would have provided the Grand Jury with even this most basic information.

4. Most significantly, the District provides the residents of Bell Canyon with their own unique form of local government. As a community services district authorized by law to provide a wide variety of services to its citizens, and attuned to local issues, the District is in a unique position to adapt to meet the needs of its residents. Sadly, it appears that the Grand Jury simply did not understand, nor even make the effort to check, the District's authorities or efforts in this regard.

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<sup>1</sup> The report apparently, and incorrectly, asserts that the District is the only community services district in Ventura County. In fact, the Channel Islands Beach Community Services District is a second community services district located in the unincorporated areas of Silverstrand, Hollywood-By-The-Sea and Hollywood Beach, adjacent to Channel Islands Harbor. That district also supplies trash collection and removal services for its residents, just like Bell Canyon.

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Given these facts, the Grand Jury's recommendation as it relates to the District lacks even a semblance of credibility. If the Grand Jury would like to validly "study" the District, we would welcome the opportunity to provide you with further information. Please contact our District General Manager, Carol R. Henderson, at (818) 346-9879, and she would be delighted to provide you with further information regarding the District.

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the report.

Very truly yours,

Bell Canyon Community Services District  
Board of Directors

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marc Silverstein" with a small flourish at the end.

Marc Silverstein, President

/acc

cc: The Honorable Frank Schillo, Supervisor  
Second District

Mr. Arnold Dowdy, Executive Officer  
Ventura County Local Agency Formation Commission

The Honorable Charles W. Campbell, Jr.  
Presiding Judge, Ventura County Superior Court

Bell Canyon Board of Directors