

EL DORADO COUNTY

GRAND JURY REPORT

2000-2001



LAKE TAHOE

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Foreward

Just what is the Grand Jury, who are its members, and what are their functions? William J. Shaw and Noah Weinstein in their article, Grand Jury Reports – A Safeguard of Democracy, describe a Grand Jury as “a short-lived, representative, non-political body of citizens functioning without hope of personal aggrandizement. It [the Grand Jury] comes from the citizens at large and soon disappears into anonymity without individual recognition or personal reward.” In El Dorado County this is a group of 19 citizens who have the ability, time and willingness to serve the citizens of the County for a period of one year.

The requirements for service are basic and designed to allow and encourage maximum participation by the County’s citizens. A juror must be 18 years old, a United States citizen, and a resident of El Dorado County for at least one-year on the date they are sworn to service. The candidate for juror must also possess natural faculties of ordinary intelligence, sound judgment, and fair character.

Service on the Grand Jury is an act of citizenship. Individuals selected for the Grand Jury should expect to work a minimum of three six-hour days per week throughout their year of service. Remuneration for service is paid at the rate of \$10.00 per day for those days actually worked. Mileage driven for grand jury business is currently reimbursed at the rate paid to all county employees.

The Grand Jury essentially serves as the agency of civilian oversight for our local government. The common public perception of the Grand Jury is a body taking testimony and handing down Criminal Indictments. In reality, the principal functions of the Grand Jury are civil in nature. Some duties, such as the inspections of public prisons, are required by law to be performed on a yearly basis. The majority of the Grand Jury’s inquiries, however, are the result of its own internal direction. Generally, the Grand Jury audits local government processes, expenditures, and the actions of its officials. Practically speaking, a grand jury primarily responds to complaints brought to it by citizens of the County, to issues of concern and public debate as publicized in the local media, and to other issues exposed during the investigation of complaints.

During the course of its inquiries, members of the Grand Jury not only will find conditions and practices within government that deserve recommendations for improvement, they also will encounter examples of excellent service performed by units or persons in local government. Grand Juries by their very design are intended to identify and recommend improvement of deficiencies within government; as such, reports of the Grand Jury tend to be viewed as negative in nature. It would be unfair, however, for the Report of the Grand Jury to focus on the negative without recognizing outstanding performance within government. In that light, this Report also contains commendations for those persons, encountered by members of the Grand Jury, who were noted to have performed exemplary service for the County.

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At the conclusion of its investigations the Grand Jury may issue an indictment, an accusation, and/or a report. The year-end Report of the Grand Jury is a compilation of investigative reports complete with recommendations for change that are intended to improve the operations of government and so better serve the citizens of this County. Grand Juries have no power to impose their recommendations on local government. Grand Juries cannot enforce their recommendations; they merely have the ability to "shine a light" on the facts uncovered by their inquiries, thus bringing matters to the public's attention. The Report then provides a vehicle for public debate. It is a matter for the public to decide whether the recommendations of the Grand Jury are appropriate, and whether actions taken by government officials in response to those recommendations are themselves appropriate. Ultimately, the citizens of the County carry out their role in this process, by expressing their judgment on the issues at the ballot box.



Kenn Womack
Foreman

To Obtain an Application

Any interested citizen who meets the required qualifications and is able to make the time commitment may request an application for appointment to the Grand Jury from the appointed court secretary. The secretary is located at:

495 Main Street
Placerville, California 95667
(530) 621-6451

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWARD	i
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY	
Resolution	vii
LETTER TO THE JUDGE FROM FOREMAN	viii
JUDGE'S LETTER TO THE GRAND JURY	ix
EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY	
2000/2001	x
Group Picture	xi
CITIZENS COMPLAINTS INDEX	xv
CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE	
Abuse of Sick Leave by Sheriff's Department	1
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-021A	
Acting and Overfill Positions	3
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-021B	
Allegation of Cover-up of Criminal Conduct	9
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-0026	
Undocumented Movement of an Inmate	16
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-029	
Candidate Not Qualified to Sit for Lieutenant's Exam	18
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-030	
CRIMINAL JUSTICE, JAIL REPORTS	
El Dorado County Jail, Placerville	23
El Dorado County Jail, South Lake Tahoe	25
El Dorado County Juvenile Hall	27
Growlersberg Conservation Camp, Georgetown	29

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Ralph M. Brown Act Survey 33

Black Oak Mine Unified School District 37
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-008

El Dorado Union High School District 41
Oak Ridge High School

Golden Ridge School at Juvenile Hall 43

GOVERNMENT & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Justice Center/All Star Investments 47
Investigation #00/01-I-007

Unsecured Property Tax Delinquencies 61
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-016

Acquisition and Use of the Logan Building and Related Property 63
Exhibit 1 86
Exhibit 2 87

Procedures for Board of Supervisors' Meetings 89

Employee Evaluations 101

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES COMMITTEE

Department of Social Services – Fiscal Control 109
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-032

INFORMATION SERVICES COMMITTEE

**Implementation of New Computer System for the
El Dorado County Superior Court** 113

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Environmental Management Department 119

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE

Working Conditions in Building 300 125
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-023

Animal Control Facilities 127

PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE (CONT.)

Basement Flooding at District Attorney's Office 129

Department of Transportation 130
Maintenance

Use of Laminated Beams in Exterior Construction 132

SOUTH LAKE TAHOE COMMITTEE

Policy and Procedures for Counter Reports 137
Citizen Complaint #00/01-C-005

Disabled Parking Citations Issuance by Private Security Personnel 139
Investigation #00/01-I-002

SPECIAL DISTRICTS COMMITTEE

Planning & Environment Committee 145
El Dorado County Water Agency

El Dorado Irrigation District 151

Rescue Fire Protection District Inquiry 154
Citizen Complaint #C-00/01-017

APPENDIX A

Instructions to Respondents 158

APPENDIX B

Commendation to Elections Department 163

**EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2000-2001**

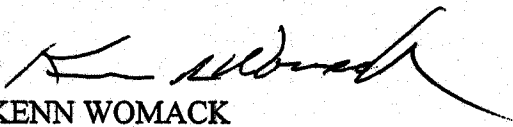
Resolution

WHEREAS, the EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY has conducted investigations and has arrived at certain finding and recommendations; and

WHEREAS, the EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY desires to make its final report thereon;

RESOLVED, by the EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY that the attached report be, and hereby is, adopted as the final report and conclusions of the EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY, 2000-2001.

PASSED AND ADOPTED at the meeting of the EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY this twentieth day of June, Two Thousand and One.


KENN WOMACK
Foreman

EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY

P.O. Box 472

Placerville, CA 95667

Judge Jerald Lasarow
Superior Court
1354 Johnson Blvd., Suite 1
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

15 June 2001

Dear Judge Lasarow:

The term of the 2000/2001 Grand Jury is nearing its end. The nineteen members who were in place at the end of Grand Jury orientation and training have completed their tour of duty intact. This is no small feat in and of itself, given the commitment of time and effort involved in grand jury duty. The service the individual jurors rendered to the residents of El Dorado County is commendable. The reward for that service is significant when measured in terms of the personal satisfaction gained for having helped preserve an open and democratic form of government.

The Grand Jury has had a busy and eventful year. In addition to a number of major investigations, we have undertaken a revision of the El Dorado County Grand Jury Handbook, a review and critique of the McGeorge School of Law proposal for grand jury reform, and successfully defended ourselves in litigation. The final report of the 2000/2001 Grand Jury is attached for your review and approval.

Finally, the Grand Jury would like to express our appreciation for your stewardship. Your availability for, and assistance with, guidance and counsel has been exemplary. Your willingness to support the Grand Jury's inquiry into issues, even when the findings of such inquiry might bruise the image of the Court's administration, is itself remarkable. As Foreman of the Grand Jury, I have had the opportunity to observe and interact with five of the Judges of the El Dorado County Courts. Having spent my entire career working in the Criminal Justice system, it is my opinion that the residents of this County are blessed to have Judges with the quality and dedication that all of you have demonstrated this year.

Sincerely,



KENN WOMACK
Foreman

The Superior Court

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF EL DORADO
495 MAIN STREET
PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA 95667
(530) 621-6459

Dear Grand Jury Members:

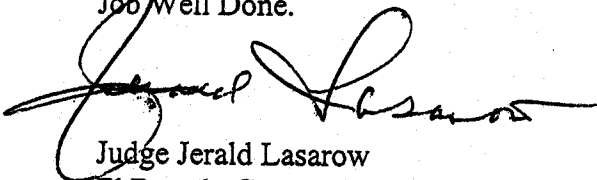
As Supervising Judge of the 2000/2001 Grand Jury and on behalf of the El Dorado County Superior Court, I want to thank you for a year's hard work and dedication to the Grand Jury. The primary function of the Grand Jury is the examination of all aspects of the county government and special districts and assuring efficient government in the best interests of the citizens of El Dorado County.

Upon reviewing your report, it is obvious that each of you has put in many long hours and days in fulfilling your oath and obligation to the 2000/2001 Grand Jury. It is only with citizens like yourselves that the Grand Jury can continue to be effective in its responsibilities to our citizens.

In your functions as Grand Jurors, it is not only important in examining county government and special districts to make suggestions or recommendations for better government, but it is also important to inform our citizens that some departments in our county government and special districts are well organized and efficient.

I want to personally thank Mr. Ken Womack, the Foreperson of the 2000/2001 Grand Jury. Ken has proved himself to be a great leader and organizer. The citizens of our county owe a great deal to Mr. Womack for his dedication and service to the Grand Jury, as well as to all the other members of the Grand Jury.

Job Well Done.



Judge Jerald Lasarow
El Dorado County Superior Court

EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY

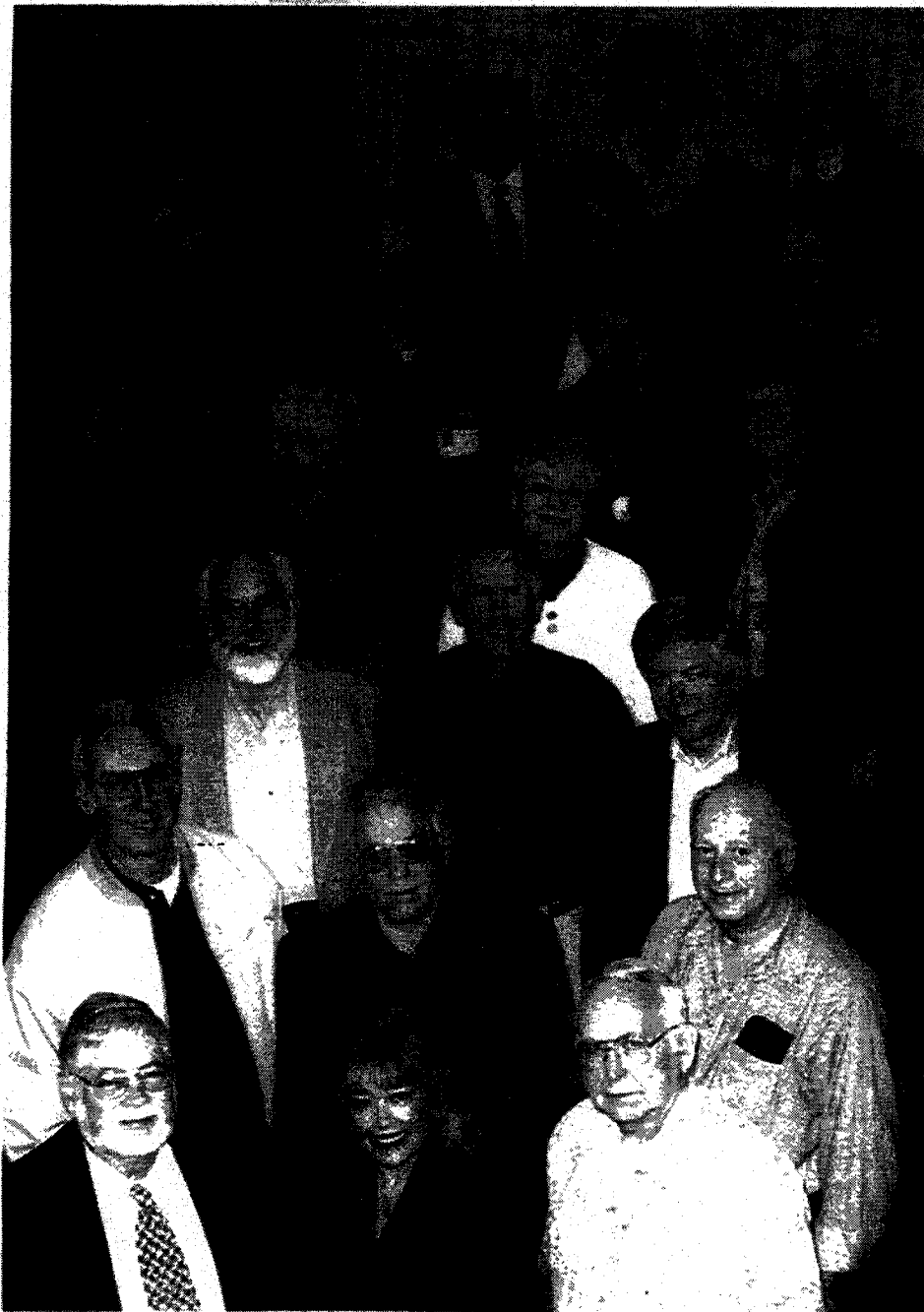
2000/2001

Honorable Jerald M. Lasarow, Supervising Judge

Kenn Womack, Foreman
Bruce Bogart, Foreman Pro Tempore
Tess Welsh, Recording Secretary
Richard Sohrweide, Sergeant-at-Arms

Deborah Burgess
Charles Caraway
Tim Howell
Judy Griswold
Arla Martin
Richard Nichols
Nancy Powers
Becky Peterson

John Plymeyer
William Rickard
Robert Russell
Linda Stroot
Ted Shults
Kenneth Weitzman
Norma Woodward



2000-2001 EL DORADO COUNTY GRAND JURY

Bottom row (left to right): Robert Russell, Becky Peterson, Ted Shults
Second row: Richard Sohrweide, Charles Caraway, William Rickard
Third row: Kenn Womack, jury foreman, Kenneth Weitzman, Bruce Bogart, foreman pro tem
Fourth row: Richard Nichols, Norma Woodward, Tess Welsh
Fifth row: Tim Howell, Judy Griswold, Arla Martin
Sixth row: Holly Warren, Grand Jury Secretary
Top row: John Plymyer, Linda Stroot, Nancy Powers

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Honorable Jerry Lasarow, presiding judge; Deborah Burgess

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