

December 18, 2014

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ATTN: The Breeze

LOOKING FOR AN EXCITING 'ENCORE' OPPORTUNITY?

Are you retired but still eager to contribute? Would you like to serve your community in a challenging and high-impact fashion? Be part of a committed, caring team? Work where there are no biases based on age, cultural background or economic status?

If that sounds good, consider this: the Ventura County (Civil) Grand Jury will soon be accepting applications for new jurors to serve from July 1, 2015 to July 1, 2016. Jurors come from all walks of life and volunteer to serve up to 35 hours a week for a year. (With advance notice, single days off and vacations may be taken at any time.) Jurors receive a stipend of \$25 per day worked outside the home, plus mileage at the IRS rate—currently 56 cents a mile.

The civil grand jury does not pursue criminal cases nor give evidence in court—that is the role of the criminal grand jury. The civil grand jury is a panel of 19 citizens whose responsibility is to determine whether local government is serving the best interests of residents, applying the law fairly and using resources wisely. In its role as “public watchdog,” the civil grand jury investigates complaints from residents about county agencies, city councils, school districts, jails, hospitals, water districts and so on.

Complaints may range from alleged violations of city and county codes to disaster preparedness in schools and the county’s contracting procedures—Issues that directly or indirectly affect every county resident. Jurors take an in-depth look at the policies, processes and practices of the department or agency in question. They are empowered to inspect financial and other records; order audits; tour facilities such as jails, airports and harbors; and conduct confidential interviews with any public official or employee.

After an investigation, the jury prepares a written report and publishes its methodology, facts, findings and recommendations. Most public agencies are required by law to respond to these reports. Numerous positive changes have followed grand jury investigations and reports.

To qualify for service you must be a citizen 18 years of age or older, reside in Ventura County for at least a year immediately before serving, have average intelligence and good character and know sufficient English. No legal or government experience or previous knowledge is needed, but basic computer skills are desirable.

“The Grand Jury is truly a ‘by the people, for the people’ institution,” says Foreman Robert Stewart. “We encourage residents from all cultural groups and all parts of the county to apply.”

For details about the grand jury’s mission and to view previous years’ reports, visit <http://ventura.org/grand-jury>. Beginning in January, applications may be downloaded from that site or

requested by telephone at **(805) 654-2256. They** will be accepted until April 15. An open house for interested members of the public will be held early next year; watch for announcements.

In addition, you may request speakers to give a presentation for your organization or community group by calling the grand jury's community relations committee at (805) 477-1600

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