



MEDIA ADVISORY

Release Date: April 2, 2026
For Immediate Release

SUPERIOR
COURT OF
CALIFORNIA
COUNTY OF
SANTA CRUZ
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Our Civil Grand Jury: An Opportunity for Public Service that Supports Our Local Community

By Judge Katherine A. Hansen

Throughout California, each county is served by a civil grand jury, an essential part of our judicial system that operates independently from the courts. Each civil grand jury functions as an investigative and reporting body, selecting areas of local government to review each year. After conducting confidential investigations, the grand jury issues public reports detailing its findings and recommendations.

The purpose of the civil grand jury is to strengthen local government through careful oversight, investigations, and thoughtful recommendations. Each county's grand jury has broad discretion in choosing what to examine, allowing it to focus on issues most relevant to its community. In Santa Cruz County, the grand jury evaluates local agencies to promote transparency, accountability, effective use of resources, and alignment with public goals.

Each year, a new civil grand jury is selected. The Santa Cruz County Superior Court will soon begin reviewing applications, interviewing candidates, and appointing members for the 2026–2027 term. We encourage you to consider applying. Service on the civil grand jury offers a unique opportunity to work alongside dedicated community members, investigate meaningful issues, and contribute to improving local government.

Past grand juries in Santa Cruz County have made a lasting impact. Their reports and recommendations have led to meaningful improvements, demonstrating how individual voices can drive positive change for the entire community. In the 2024-2025 term, our civil grand jury investigated the following agencies or topics: climate action; commitments to the public; handcuffing and transport in the county; the county's building permit process; human trafficking in the county; and the county Health Services Agency. In the 2023-2024 term, our civil grand jury investigated the following agencies or topics: county local roads; county jail healthcare and reentry support; county Behavioral Health Division; county Child Protective Services; CZU fire victims four years later; inclusionary housing in the city of Santa Cruz; county personnel department; and preventing rape and domestic violence in the city of Santa Cruz. We are deeply grateful to all who have served, including our current 2025–2026 grand jury, for their time, commitment, and public service.

The 2026–2027 grand jury term begins July 1, 2026. The jury is usually composed of 19 volunteer members and 11 alternates who serve for one year, contributing approximately 20 hours per week, depending on the scope of

investigations. Recent grand juries have successfully combined in-person and remote work, and this flexible approach is expected to continue.

We are seeking thoughtful, collaborative, and community-minded residents who are committed to making a difference. As the supervising judge of the Santa Cruz County civil grand jury, I invite you to apply, and to encourage others (friends, family, and neighbors) to do the same. Your perspective and experience are invaluable to the continued strength and effectiveness of our local government.

For further information, please email hrinfo@santacruzcourt.org with questions, or go to our local civil grand jury website for additional information and to review past reports: <https://www.santacruzcountyca.gov/Departments/GrandJury.aspx>

