

# Judge Houry Sanderson: Serve your community on Fresno County grand jury

By Houry Sanderson

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- More information

What: 2015-16 Fresno County Grand Jury

How to apply: [www.fresno.courts.ca.gov/jury/grand\\_jury](http://www.fresno.courts.ca.gov/jury/grand_jury)

Requirements: U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old and one year of residency in Fresno County

Deadline: March 2

When a veteran judge like Robert Oliver retires, it is hard to fill such big shoes. I have been tasked with taking over one of his longtime positions with the courts, chair of the Jury Oversight Committee. I will do my utmost to maintain the high quality of leadership he has shown.

This brings me to the reason I am writing this: to solicit and encourage members of our community to volunteer for the annual grand jury roster.

Grand juries in California are panels made up of either 19 or 23 individuals (a few of the larger counties have 23 members, Fresno County has 19). Grand jurors typically serve for a year, from July 1 to June 30.

The grand jury is a constitutionally mandated judicial body charged to investigate civil matters but not criminal matters. The grand jury's responsibilities include investigating issues regarding county government and public agencies funded by the government, and issuing reports and recommendations when appropriate. The grand jury is also mandated by law to respond to citizens' complaint letters and to inquire into the condition and management of public detention facilities within the county.

Among the basic qualifications needed to apply for a grand jury position include being a U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older, and having at least 1 year residency in Fresno County.

It is only fair to also point out that the commitment to serve as a grand juror may be up to 40 hours a month, and based on the subject matter or the need, may even be as many as 80 hours a month. More information can be found at [www.fresno.courts.ca.gov/jury/grand\\_jury](http://www.fresno.courts.ca.gov/jury/grand_jury)

A little bit about the selection process:

A committee of judges is tasked to review and/or interview each prospective grand juror application. At the conclusion of this individual evaluation process, all of the Fresno County Superior Court judicial officers meet and confer about the applicants; thereafter, a random selection of 19 individuals, barring any holdovers, is made.

Having been a longstanding member of the Jury Oversight Committee, I can attest how impressive it is to meet and converse with so many civic minded, community oriented and sincerely caring members of our community.

I can say that the selection process is quite challenging for the judges because, frankly, all of the applicants come from that strong part of the fabric of our society that truly gives our community the extra sheen and the brightness that

we often lack seeing in our day-to-day lives. Without a doubt, this sacrifice that our civic-minded citizens make each year to be considered for a grand juror position is an integral part of our justice system.

I encourage all that are interested to check our Fresno County website, review the previous grand jury reports and apply by the March 2 deadline.

Judge Houry Sanderson is chairwoman of the Fresno Superior Court Jury Oversight Committee.

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