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Did the 2016-17 Yolo County Grand Jury Improve Local Government?

Yolo County Grand Jury releases annual impact analysis

(WOODLAND, CALIFORNIA) -- The Yolo County Grand Jury today released its annual impact analysis, "Did the 2016-17 Grand Jury Improve Local Government?" The analysis looks at county and school district responses to six investigative reports published by the Grand Jury last year.

The six reports contained 43 findings and 30 recommendations focused on improving local government. The reports were titled:

- "Yolo County Elections Office Indiscretions and Culpability"
- "Yolo Habitat Conservancy: Perseverance, Preservation and Possibilities"
- "Yolo County Adult and Youth Detention Facility Inspection"
- "Bicycle Safety"
- "California Connections to Success Act: A Better Bridge to Adulthood"
- "Are Yolo County Schools in Compliance with School Safety Plans?"

"The 2016-17 Yolo County Grand Jury helped spur improvements in school safety planning, promoted procedural changes in the Elections Office, raised awareness of a successful program to support foster care youth to age 21, and identified a gap in recordkeeping at jail medical facilities," said Judy Wohlfrom, foreperson of 2017-18 Yolo County Grand Jury. "We are pleased to provide this analysis to the public."

Highlights of findings, recommendations and responses to last year's reports include:

- **Elections Office:** The Assessor/Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters Office developed and began implementation of a corrective action plan in response to complaints of favoritism, low morale, ineffective staff and management training, and questionable accounting practices in the Elections Office.
- **California Connections to Success Act:** Yolo County foster youth ages 18-21 have significantly improved high school graduation and college entry rates since the county extended foster care to age 21. High housing costs and a lack of affordable housing, however, preclude these youth from residing in Yolo. Grand Jury recommendations to provide additional financial assistance, low-cost housing options and transportation assistance were rejected as unreasonable and beyond the scope of Child Welfare Services.

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- **School Safety:** The Grand Jury found that all Yolo County school districts except Winters were in compliance with state-required safety plans. (Winters has subsequently completed a new plan.) School districts, however, approached school safety in disparate ways. Jurors recommended that each district conduct a feasibility study regarding installation of perimeter fencing and locked access to school sites. The Davis School Joint Unified School District, stated that it does not favor perimeter fencing and locked gates, except in areas serving very young children. Davis' policy is consistent with the Civic Center Act, which encourages schools to be available to citizens and community groups after school hours. Esparto Unified also partially disagreed with the overall fencing recommendation but is currently considering fencing around the junior high school.

Jurors also recommended that the Yolo County Board of Supervisors establish procedures to correct traffic safety issues along Yolo Avenue (California State Route 16) in Esparto for students accessing that district's campuses. The County Administrative Officer, on behalf of the Board of Supervisors, responded that Yolo County does not have jurisdiction over State Route 16, but will work collaboratively with the state to address road safety issues on state highways in Yolo County.

The full report will be posted online on the Grand Jury's website:

<http://www.yolocounty.org/business/community/grand-jury/yolo-county-grand-jury-reports>

About the Yolo County Grand Jury

The Yolo County Grand Jury is made up of 19 citizens selected by the Yolo County Superior Court. Jurors serve one-year terms that conclude on June 30 each year. In addition to advising the county District Attorney on whether to bring indictments in select criminal cases, the Yolo County Grand Jury also conducts an annual inquiry into the condition and management of public jails and serves as a citizen watchdog over public offices and agencies within the county.

Yolo County residents who are interested in participating on the Grand Jury may learn how to apply at www.yolocounty.org/business/community/grand-jury.

How to file a complaint with the Grand Jury

Residents who have a complaint or concern about a public official or entity can download an application here: <https://yolocountyca.seamlessdocs.com/f/CitizensComplaintForm>. Complaint forms are also available at the county courthouse, county jail facilities and local libraries, or can be requested by calling (530) 406-5088 or writing to the Grand Jury, P.O. Box 2142, Woodland, CA 95776. Completed complaint forms, including any relevant evidence, should be mailed to P.O. Box 2142, Woodland, CA 95776 or emailed to grandjury@sbcglobal.net.