

2024 – 2025

KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY



FINAL REPORT







Kern County **GRAND JURY**

June 18, 2025

The Honorable John W. Lua
Presiding Judge
Kern County Superior Court
1415 Truxton Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Dear Judge Lua:

The term of the 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury has been fulfilled. I respectfully submit our Final Report.

Although this Grand Jury was comprised of 19 competent, engaged and dedicated individuals, it would not have been successful without the leadership, advice and expert help provided by yourself, Judge Bradshaw and the entire Court staff. Special thanks to Julie Flores, Executive Administrative Secretary, for her unwavering support.

Additionally, the Grand Jury worked closely with County Counsel Margo Raison, District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer and CAO Nancy Anderson and their respective dedicated staff. Their combined efforts were essential to the Jury's success.

I would be remiss not to credit Senior Office Services Specialist Eleanor Lara for her daily contributions, extensive knowledge, organizational skills and all-around assistance to the Grand Jury.

As the watchdog of the County, the Civil Grand Jury investigated numerous entities and released over a dozen reports to the public. We addressed complaints from concerned citizens, attended the Board of Supervisors meetings, and inquired into the condition of detention facilities within the county.

The Grand Jury toured many county and city departments and invited nine county and city dignitaries to address the Jury: enriching the jurors with invaluable insights into governmental functions.

The District Attorney brought indictments to be heard, deliberated on and returned, fulfilling our duty as the Criminal Grand Jury.

The Grand Jury participated in outreach efforts to support the county and accomplish recruitment, including Point-In-Time count, Jamison and Dream Centers donation drives, the Bakersfield Christmas Parade, the Home and Garden Show, a Rotary Club Breakfast and Q&A sessions at Jury Services.

Additionally, with the expertise of Kristin Davis, the Public Affairs Officer, we produced a recruitment video and appeared on KGET.

The Grand Jury Awareness Month proclaimed by the Board of Supervisors included decorating the Court House display window and hosting a ceremony at the Liberty Bell.

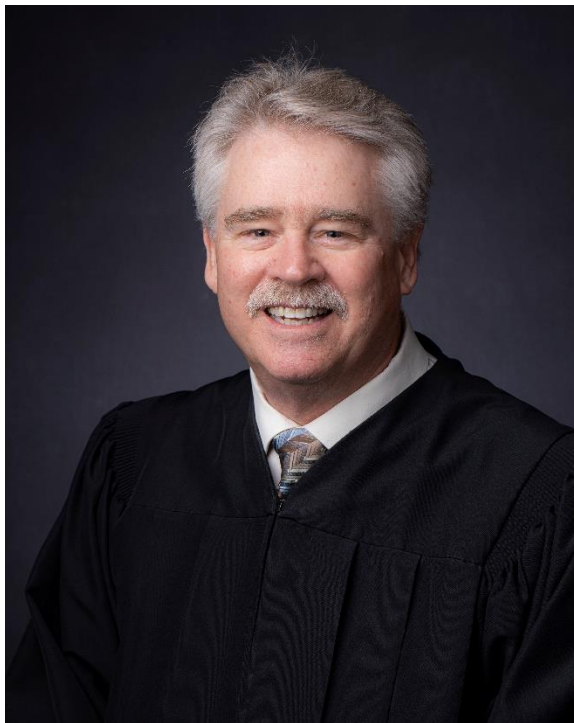
In closing, I can sum up my experience serving as Foreperson of the Grand Jury, as not only an honor, but also as a highly rewarding endeavor.

Respectfully,

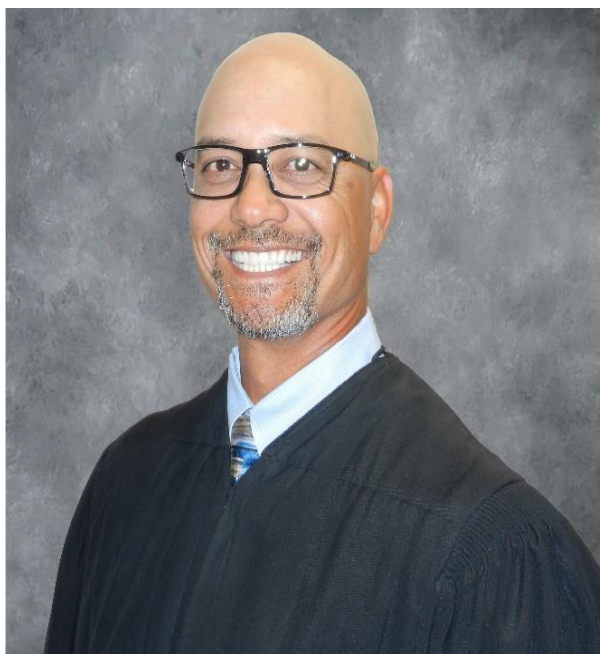
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd Lucas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Todd Lucas, Foreperson
2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury

PRESIDING JUDGES

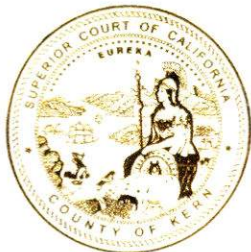


Honorable J. Eric Bradshaw
Presiding Judge – July 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024



Honorable John W. Lua
Presiding Judge – January 1, 2025 to Present





J. Eric Bradshaw
Judge

Superior Court State of California

COUNTY OF KERN

1415 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301
(661) 610-6000

Dear Members of the 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury:

You have been duly impaneled, sworn, and now constitute the 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury. In accordance with Penal Code section 914, it is my duty to instruct and charge you concerning the functions and laws that apply to your work. It is your duty to follow these instructions.

Your responsibilities are chiefly investigatory. There are two important functions.

First, to examine the functioning and performance of public offices and officers. You will report on your findings and may make recommendations for changes to the operations and structure of public offices or agencies. This is called the civil or “watch dog” function.

Second, to inquire into possible public offenses and, more rarely, allegations of misconduct in office by public officers, and to determine whether to return indictments charging the commission of public offenses, or accusations in the case of public office misconduct. This responsibility is called the criminal function.

Most grand juries have found their various functions are more easily accomplished by dividing into committees. There is no hard and fast rule as to what or how many committees you should organize. In the past, grand juries have functioned through committees such as administrative, criminal justice, health and welfare, and various other special committees. The foreperson will make committee appointments after having had an opportunity to become acquainted with all members of the grand jury, including the background, occupation, and general qualifications of each member. Each committee will take part in selecting its own chairperson.

The 19 of you are expected to work as a body of one. You will need to determine a specific day for a weekly group meeting as well as set the operating schedule for your committees. Depending upon the work you do, there may be additional days requiring your participation and attendance with the entire Grand Jury. To be eligible for a daily juror’s fee, each juror must serve in two official sessions per day for a total of at least five hours or more. Further, you shall hold sessions when requested by the District Attorney for the presentation of criminal cases; or when requested by the Presiding Judge; and when directed by the Attorney General.

The Grand Jury is required by law to inquire into or investigate and report certain agencies or institutions. The majority of these required reporting fall under the Law and Justice Committee. To ensure that all other committees are functioning at a standardized pace, the Court, by this charge, will require all committees to investigate and report on a minimum of two entities under that committees’ jurisdiction.

Through your foreperson, you may ask the advice of the Presiding Judge, the County Counsel, or the District Attorney. Unless advice is requested, only members of the Grand Jury may be present during your sessions. The District Attorney may appear before you for the limited purpose of providing information or advice as to matters within their authority. Only Grand Jury members may be present during the expression of the opinions of the Grand Jurors or when the Jury votes.

You may seek advice from the County Counsel on civil matters. As to administrative and organizational matters, the issuing of reports or other similar matters, the Foreperson may contact the Presiding Judge for advice.

Grand Jury proceedings are confidential and are not to be discussed outside of the Grand Jury. Unauthorized disclosure of grand jury matters is a criminal offense. No grand juror has any authority to act individually. All visits made on behalf of the Grand Jury are to be made with two or more grand jurors present. Action may be taken only after a majority of grand jurors have authorized it.

Monday, July 8, 2024, you are to report to the County Administrative Office for a one-day orientation. This will mark your first day of duty.

The public rightfully expects you will diligently and impartially perform your duties, dedicating yourselves to the furtherance of the general good. I have confidence in each of you and I am equally confident your term will prove to be rewarding for you and the citizens of the County whom you have chosen to serve.



J. Eric Bradshaw, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Kern



2024 – 2025 Kern County Grand Jury

Formal Statement

Grand Juries have existed in the State of California since the adoption of the State's Constitution in 1849-50. The Constitution requires that a Grand Jury be drawn and summoned at least once a year in each county. According to Kern County Board of Supervisors' records, the first Grand Jury was selected in 1867. The Board of Supervisors' meeting minutes reflected the apportionment of persons to be selected and returned from various townships to serve as Grand and Trial Jurors for the year 1867. This would have been the first Kern County Grand Jury. At that time names of persons to serve were drawn from the property tax assessment roll. One hundred and fifty-six years later, the 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury was selected by a blind draw of over 30 volunteers. Nineteen volunteers and six alternates were selected to represent Kern County and sworn in by the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court to uphold the Grand Juror's Oath.

All Grand Juries are independent judicial bodies. The primary function of the Grand Jury, and the most important reason for its existence, is the examination of all aspects of County government, special districts, cities, and citizen complaints to insure that these bodies are being effectively governed and that public funds are being judiciously handled – in general, assuring that honest, efficient government is carried out in the best interest of the people. Additionally, the law mandates the Grand Jury inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the County.

The Grand Jury is considered to be the watchdog for the citizens of the County and an arm of the court. The Grand Jury also functions as an investigative body, conducting hearings which can lead to indictments by the Attorney General and the District Attorney's offices. To fulfill these responsibilities the Grand Jury may subpoena persons and/or records to obtain information on subjects under investigation. To protect the constitutional rights of parties being investigated, the Grand Jury as a group is and as individuals are sworn to complete lifelong confidentiality.

Standing Committees are established to conduct investigations:

- **Administration, Audit, and County Service** Committee reviews and oversees County Departments management, performance, and execution of fiscal responsibilities to the taxpayers of Kern County.

- **Cities and Joint Powers** Committee reviews and oversees incorporated cities and Joint Powers Agreements within the County. This Committee investigates records, accounts, officers, departments, and functions of cities.
- **Health, Education, and Social Services** Committee reviews and inquiries into the operations of all schools and hospital districts, and County departments dealing with health services, social services, and educational issues.
- **Law and Justice** Committee reviews and investigates all law enforcement agencies, jails and prisons within Kern County.
- **Special Districts** Committee oversees and reviews the performance and execution of fiscal responsibilities of the Special Districts within Kern County.
- **Ad Hoc** Committees are formed to assist when needed.

For effective operation, there are five non-investigative internal committees:

- Budget
- Edit and Final Report
- Grand Jury Library
- Kitchen
- Public Relations

The Grand Jury conducts business, with a quorum of at least 15 jurors, at a weekly General Meeting (Plenary). Any and all action taken during the year is considered to be official Grand Jury business and must be approved by a supermajority of at least 12 of the 19 Jurors. When an investigation involves an issue that could not be completed with the year, the Presiding Judge can hold over the evidence gathered for the next Grand Jury (if the previous Grand Jury so requests).

At the end of the term, the Grand Jury issues a Final Report to the Presiding Judge containing all the reports received to date. The Final Report concludes the obligation of the Grand Jury to the Superior Court.

The 2024-2025 Kern County Grand Jury consisted of 19 individuals who found this experience to be personally rewarding and enriching as well as a significant contribution to public service.

The Grand Jury encourages all citizens to apply to serve on the Grand Jury. All reports and recruitment information are available on the Grand Jury website:
www.kerncounty.com/government/other-agencies/grand-jury.



GRAND JUROR'S OATH

The following oath is administered to Grand Jurors:

“I do solemnly swear (affirm) that I will support the Constitution of the United States and of the State of California, and all laws made pursuant to and in conformity therewith, will diligently inquire into, and true presentment make, of all public offenses against the people of this state, committed or triable within this county, of which the grand jury shall have or can obtain legal evidence. Further, I will not disclose any evidence brought before the grand jury, nor anything which I or any other grand juror may say, not the manner in which I or any other grand juror may have voted on any matter before the grand jury. I will keep the charge that will be given to me by the court.”

(Penal Code §911)

GRAND JURY SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

Tours –

Bakersfield Police Department Tour
California Corrections Instruction, Tehachapi
Camp Erwin Owens Tour
Central Valley Holocaust Memorial
Kern County Coroner's Office
Kern County Crime Lab
Sheriff's Office Evidence and Property Facility

Events –

Bakersfield Rotary Breakfast – overview of Grand Jury Presentation
Christmas Parade
Grand Jury Awareness Month
Great Shake-Out Earthquake Drill
Home and Garden Show
Point-in-Time (Homeless Count)

Speakers –

Aaron Duncan – Kern County Fire Chief
Blair Knox – LAFCO
Chief Greg Terry – Bakersfield Police Department
Donny Youngblood – Kern County Sheriff
Honorable John W. Lua – Kern County Superior Court Presiding Judge
Kendra Graham – Assistant County Counsel – The Brown Act
Nancy Anderson – Bakersfield Chief Administrative Officer
Nick Cullen – Director, Bakersfield Animal Services

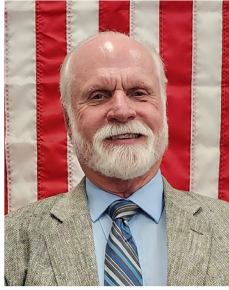
2024-2025

Kern County Grand Jurors



Name	Terms Served	Nominating Judge
Lucas, Todd, Foreperson	2023-24, 2024-25	Honorable David R. Zulfa
Agbonkonkon, Frank	2023-24, 2024-25	Honorable Gregory A. Pulskamp
Aguilar, Kathi	2023-24, 2024-25	Honorable Therese M. Foley
Albritton, Steve	2023-24, 2024-25	Honorable Kenneth R. Green, Jr.
Banks, Karen	2024-25	Honorable John R. Brownlee
Biscar, Donalda	2018-19, 2019-20, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25	Honorable John R. Brownlee
Bowles, Stephen	2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-2025	Honorable John R. Brownlee
Chaffin, Gary	2014-15, 2015-16, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25	Honorable Gregory A. Pulskamp
Hukill, Kelly	2024-25	Honorable Kenneth R. Green, Jr.
Johnson, Bernard	2024-25	Honorable Kenneth R. Green, Jr.
Kessinger-Verdugo, Debra	2024-25	Honorable Elizabet Rodriguez
McClure, Lydia	2024-25	Honorable David R. Zulfa
Medrano, Clara	2024-25	Honorable David R. Zulfa
Pasek, Thomas	2016-17, 2017-18, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25	Honorable John W. Lua
Ramzan, Khalil	2024-25	Honorable John W. Lua
Robledo, Alfredo	2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25	Honorable John W. Lua
Thomas, Jacqueline	2023-24, 2024-25	Honorable John W. Lua
Walter, Kenneth	2024-25	Honorable Bradley King
Watson, Debra	2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25	Honorable Bradley King
Also served:		
Chen, Yvette	2015-16, 2016-17, 2018-19, 2024-25	Honorable Gregory A. Pulskamp
Green, Kathleen	2022-23, 2024-25	Honorable Kenneth R. Green, Jr.
Lyday, Bonnie	2018-19, 2020-21, 2024-25	Honorable Elizabet Rodriguez
McDonald, Richard	2024-25	Honorable David R. Zulfa
Vicuna, Enrique	2018-19, 2019-20, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25	Honorable Bradley King

**KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
2024-2025**



**Todd Lucas
Foreperson**



**Frank Agbonkonkon
HESS**



**Kathi Aguilar
Recording Secretary**



**Steve Albritton
Special Districts**



**Karen Banks
HESS**



**Donaldda Biscar
Special Districts**



**Stephen Bowles
Admin & Audit**



**Gary Chaffin
Admin & Audit**



**Kelly Hukill
Cities**



**Bernard Johnson
Law & Justice**



**Lydia McClure
Law & Justice**



**Clara Medrano
Admin & Audit**



**Tom Pasek
Cities**

**KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
2024-2025**



**Khalil Ramzan
HESS**



**Alfredo Robledo
Special Districts**



**Jackie Thomas
HESS**



**Debra Kessinger-Verdugo
Law & Justice**



**Kenneth Walter
Law & Justice**



**Debra Watson
Cities**

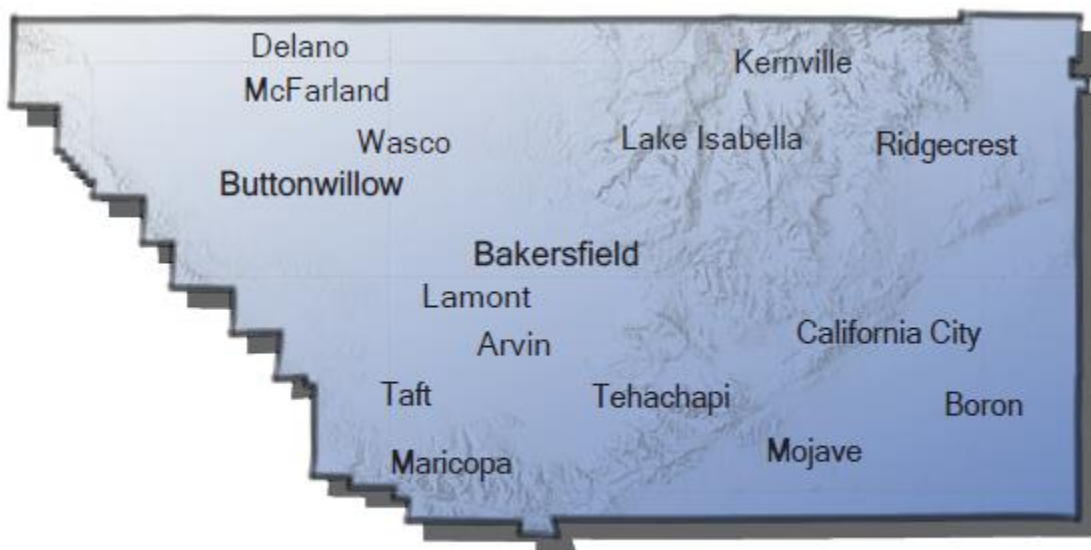


**Eleanor Lara
Senior Office Services Specialist**



Kern County

Grand Jury Reports



Reports and responses received after the Final Report printing are available on the Grand Jury website at <https://www.kerncounty.com/government/other-agencies/grand-jury>