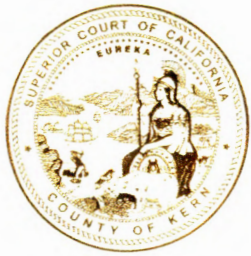


SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA



The Honorable John W. Lua
PRESIDING JUDGE

January 1, 2025, to Present



John W. Lua
Judge

Superior Court State of California

COUNTY OF KERN

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

Dear Members of the 2025-2026 Kern County Grand Jury:

You have been duly impaneled, sworn, and now constitute the 2025-2026 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.

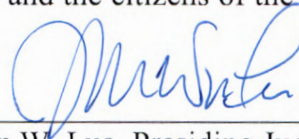
Through your foreperson, you may ask the advice of the Presiding Judge, the County Counsel, or the District Attorney. Unless advice is requested, only members of the Grand Jury may be present during your sessions. The District Attorney may appear before you for the limited purpose of providing information 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 7, 2025, 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.



John W. Lua, Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Kern



2025-2026

Steve D. Bowles
Foreman

Karen Banks

Susan Brooks Lange

Gary Chaffin

Kathleen Green

Gregory Hanel

Judi House

Bernard Johnson

Debra Kessinger-Verdugo

Lon Letherman

Clara Medrano

Urie Norris

Joan Ott

Thomas Pasek

Khalil Ramzan

Adela Rivers

Alfredo Robledo

Michael Shugart

Debra Watson

Kern County GRAND JURY

The Honorable John W. Lua, Presiding Judge:

As the term of the 2025-2026 Kern County Grand Jury comes to an end, I respectfully submit this final report.

On behalf of the Grand Jury, I would like to commend you and your staff, particularly Julie Flores, Executive Secretary, for all the guidance and assistance throughout the year. Special thanks to Senior Office Services Specialist Eleanor Lara for her excellent service and dedication to keeping the high standards and traditions alive throughout the Grand Jury's ever-changing dynamics.

This term saw one Criminal Indictment. We would like to thank Chief Deputy D.A. Eric Smith. The indictment process is both educational and challenging. We would also like to thank District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer and her entire office for their support this year.

The Grand Jury toured several facilities this year. We also conducted numerous investigations, leading to 14 reports. This year's 19 members of the Grand Jury came from diverse backgrounds, educational levels, ethnicities and socio-economic statuses. As the foreman, I stressed the importance of Communication, Cooperation, Compromise, and most importantly, Respect.

The term saw more community engagement. We would like to thank the Redwood High School Color Guard as well as the Frontier High School Band for their involvement in the Grand Jury Awareness Ceremony held at the Liberty Bell. Raising awareness and sharing the opportunity to serve the community is an important part of the mission of the Grand Jury.

We look forward to sharing our experience with future jurors as we close out the 2025-2026 term.

Once again, thank you and your entire staff for your support. The citizens of Kern County are fortunate to have a strong network reinforcing the importance of a strong Grand Jury and its mission.

Respectfully,

Steve Bowles, Foreman

2025-2026 Kern County Grand Jury

PROCLAMATION

The Board of Supervisors
of the County of Kern,
State of California
has officially proclaimed

February 2026

as

**Grand Jury Awareness
Month in Kern County**

and this recognition has
been entered in the
official Board minutes



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Phoebe R. Pata", written over a horizontal line.

CHAIRMAN, KERN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

February 24, 2026

DATE



2025-2026 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY



911 Memorial

Bakersfield City Fire Department - Station 15

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

2025-2026

KERN COUNTY GRAND JURORS



NAME	TERMS SERVED	NOMINATING JUDGE
Karen Banks	2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable John R. Brownlee
Steve Bowles	2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable John R. Brownlee
Susan Brooks-Lange	2025-26	Honorable Michel A. Caves
Gary Chaffin	2014-15, 2015-16, 2018-19, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable Gregory AA Pulskamp
Kathleen Green	2022-23, 2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable Dawn Bittleston
Gregory Hanel	2025-26	Honorable Gregory A. Pulskamp
Judith House	2013-14, 2014-15, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2020-21, 2021-22, 2023-24, 2025-26	Honorable John R. Brownlee
Bernard E Johnson	2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable Kenneth R. Green, Jr
Debra Kessinger-Verdugo	2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable Elizabet Rodriguez
Clara Madrano	2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable David R. Zulfa
Joan Ott	2025-26	Honorable Kenneth R. Green, Jr.
Thomas Pasek	2016-17, 2017-18, 2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable John W. Lua
Khalil Ramzan	2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable John W. Lua
Lon Letherman	2025-26	Honorable Gregory A. Pulskamp
Urie Norris	2025-26	Honorable Bradley King
Adela Rivers	2025-26	Honorable Dawn Bittleston
Alfredo Robledo	2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable John W. Lua
Michael Shugart	2025-26	Honorable Dawn Bittleston
Debra Watson	2021-22, 2022-23, 2024-25, 2025-26	Honorable Bradley King

MEMBERS ALSO SERVED:

Duane Shellcross
Jeff Ward



STEVE BOWLES
FOREMAN



KAREN BANKS



SUSAN LANGE



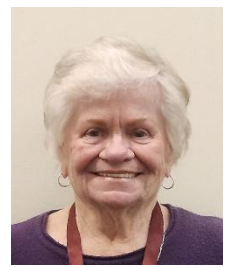
GARY CHAFFIN



KAT GREEN



GREG HANEL



JUDI HOUSE
Recording Secretary



BERNARD E.
JOHNSON
Sgt at Arms



DEBRA
KESSINGER-
VERDUGO



LON LETHERMAN



CLARA MEDRANO



URIE NORRIS



JOAN OTT



TOM PASEK
Pro Tem



KHALIL RAMZAN
I.T.S.
Sgt at Arms



ADELA RIVERS



MIKE SHUGART



ALFREDO
ROBLEDO
Parliamentarian
Sgt at Arms



DEBRA WATSON

2025-2026 KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY

TOURS

Bakersfield City Fire Department – Station 15
Bakersfield City Police Department - Drones
Bakersfield City School District – Stiern Cafeteria
Beale Memorial Library and Northeast Library
Buttonwillow Recreation and Park District - Parks
Central Valley Holocaust Museum
Camp Erwin Owen
Camp Keep
Food Truck sites – Bakersfield and Wasco
Frazier Park /Lake of the Woods - Water Wells
Kern County Crime Lab
Kern County Superintendent of Schools - Central Kitchen and Standard School District
Nutritional Services
Kern County Sheriff’s Office – Central Holding, Property Room, Lerdo Facility, Air Support,
Bomb Squad, K-9 Unit
Kern Valley Cemetery
Mojave Space Port
Mountain View Elementary School
North of the River Parks & Recreation District – Parks
“Waste Hunger – Not Food”

EVENTS

2025 Christmas Parade
CPR Training
Grand Jury Awareness Ceremony
Kern County Fire Department - CPR Demonstration
Kern County Beale Library – Legends of the Bakersfield Sound
Peace Officer Memorial - Bakersfield Fallen Officers Ceremony
Point-in-Time (Homeless Count)
Read Across America – Standard School

SPEAKERS

Bakersfield City Police Department - Lt. Joe Galland – Traffic Division
Bakersfield City Mayor - Karen K. Goh
City of Shafter Chief of Police – Randy Milligan
Kern County Sheriff’s Office – Sheriff Donny Youngblood
Kern County Public Health – Bryn Carrigan
Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) - Blair Knox
Lois Henry - Water
Superior Court of California – Presiding Judge John W. Lua

RECRUITMENT VENUES

Chevron Retired Employees
Kern County Jury Services
Kern County Employees Retirement Association
National Active /Retired Federal Employees Association
Veteran of Foreign Wars

Indictments – 1 Complaints Received – 22



2025-2026



**KERN COUNTY GRAND JURY
RELEASED REPORTS**

