



SACRAMENTO COUNTY GRAND JURY NEWS RELEASE

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Sloppy staff work and agenda hide-and-seek taint Board of Supervisors' 2023 pay raise

Missed crucial details, an uncorrected math error, and an astonishing lack of transparency are among the significant problems the 2023-24 Sacramento County Grand Jury found when it investigated the process used by the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors to award themselves a hefty salary increase in 2023.

“A critical math mistake in the informational meeting packet given to the Board led some of the supervisors – and the public – to initially think they were approving a 20-percent raise. It was, in fact, 36-percent,” said Steve Caruso, 2023-24 Grand Jury foreperson. The error was discovered after the Board of Supervisors (BOS) voted on the raise.

“Even more concerning than the math miscalculation, is the choice by county staff not to update the Board with the correct information after the fact,” Caruso said. “Among other things, it raises the question of how many other times mistakes in facts presented at Board meetings are never publicly corrected.”

To examine the BOS decision-making process, the Grand Jury interviewed 16 people and reviewed a multitude of regulations and ordinances, as well as the agenda packets for the BOS meetings on April 18, 2023 – when the raise was first introduced and approved – and May 23, 2023 – when it was adopted.

Surprisingly, the pay raise proposal appeared on the consent calendar at both the April 18 and May 23 BOS meetings. The consent calendar is typically reserved for routine or

noncontroversial matters that the BOS votes on as a single item. The consent calendar rarely attracts any public comment. Although the Board's use of the consent calendar was not unlawful, the Grand Jury reported, the consent calendar process lacks transparency to maintain the public's trust when voting on matters of significant public interest.

"During our investigation, county staff acknowledged that it was a mistake to tuck the salary increase proposal in the middle of the consent calendar," Caruso said. "But we also hold the supervisors accountable because they had the authority to take the proposal off the consent calendar to encourage more public discussion, but they made a conscious decision not to."

In another misstep that limited public input into the process, the Grand Jury's research revealed a serious mistake in the number of days between when the salary increase was approved by the BOS and its effective date.

The county directed the salary increase to start 30 days after the final vote, but California Government Code Section 25123.5 mandates a 60 day wait. State law allows such a wait to provide time for voters, if they so choose, to organize a referendum to overturn the decision.

The Grand Jury recommends seven actions the BOS and county executive team can take to improve processes. Among them are for staff to explain, in an open BOS meeting, the financial errors made in this salary increase process.

Other recommendations include that the BOS determine, again in an open BOS meeting, the validity of the salary increase ordinance as it relates to state law as well as determine if any money already paid to the supervisors should be returned to the county.

The Grand Jury also recommends the county form a citizen-based compensation commission.

The Sacramento County Grand Jury is the independent watchdog over public entities within the county. Concerned residents can contact the Grand Jury on a confidential basis through written complaints that alert the Grand Jury to issues within public entities. We would like to hear from you at www.sacgrandjury.org.

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