

GRAND JURY

County of Yolo

P.O. Box 2142

Woodland, California 95776

530-406-5088

grand-jury@sbcglobal.net

Contact: Kathleen Stock, Yolo County Grand Jury Foreperson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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YOLO COUNTY GRAND JURY ISSUES REPORT ON WINTERS JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

There was a clear conflict of interest in a consulting contract award made by the Winters Joint Unified School District (District) to a designated employee's paramour not disclosed at the time the award was made, and the employee participated in the selection of the consultant. The failure to fully and fairly disclose the existence of financial or strong personal relationship between the parties to a contract is a violation of State law and District Bylaws. These violations could allow the District to nullify the existing contract and consider discipline for the designated employee. The 2010/11 Yolo County Grand Jury recommends the District's Board of Trustees take several actions regarding the no-bid contract inappropriately awarded by a District designated employee to that person's paramour.

The Grand Jury found that the nonrenewal of another District designated employee's contract may have been influenced by the conflict created by the hiring of the consultant. The Board's decision not to renew a designated employee's contract in March 2010 proved to be highly divisive and generated numerous requests for investigation by the Grand Jury. These allegations concern violations of the Board's Policies and Bylaws and the State's open meeting Brown Act. While the Grand Jury's powers to investigate school districts are limited under the law, it may investigate procedural and operational issues but is not permitted to investigate substantive concerns. The Grand Jury found that the WJUSD Trustees violated the Brown Act by failing to place their decision about the nonrenewal properly on the agenda for open roll call. The Grand Jury found multiple examples in which the WJUSD Trustees violated the open meeting law.

MORE ---->>>

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The Grand Jury found multiple examples in which the WJUSD Board violated its own Policies and Bylaws regarding treatment of community members. Particularly egregious behaviors that should be stopped immediately are disrespectful comments and gestures made by the Board to community members during Board meeting public comment periods. The Grand Jury commends the 2010/11 Board on the steps it has taken to improve meeting professionalism.

The Grand Jury also found multiple errors in administering the State's annual standardized STAR testing in April 2011.

The District was particularly resistive to Grand Jury inquiries and made simple inquiries more procedurally difficult than necessary.

The Yolo County Grand Jury functions as a citizen "watchdog" organization to review the operations and performance of county and city governments, school districts, and special districts. Based on these assessments, the Grand Jury publishes its findings and may recommend constructive action to improve the quality and effectiveness of local government.

The public can access the full Winters Joint Unified School District report and the seven reports already released this year at the Grand Jury website: <http://www.yolocounty.org/index.aspx?page=780>. The Grand Jury will release the remainder of this year's investigative reports and the final published volume of all twelve reports on June 30.

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