

# GRAND JURY

## County of Yolo

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***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***  
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### **YOLO COUNTY GRAND JURY ISSUES REPORT ON** **ESPARTO COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT**

The Grand Jury investigated allegations of violations by the Esparto Community Services District (ECSD) Board of Directors of the State's open meeting (Ralph M. Brown) act and its own ethics policy violations. The allegations proved to be true. Multiple instances of Brown Act violations and ECSD ethics policy violations were committed in the period studied, late 2010 through March 2011, principally via e-mail. Ethics violations revolve around communications, chain of command, mutual respect, and teamwork. Even after these matters were brought to the attention of the Board, violations continued. The Grand Jury did not investigate if fraud, waste or abuse occurred, nor did it receive any evidence to raise concerns.

The Grand Jury recommends that the Board attend a variety of training classes to oversee ECSD more effectively, reverse its practice of not discussing Brown Act and ethics policy violation concerns in public, and require Brown Act and public governance training for Board and staff on a regular basis, preferably annually.

The Grand Jury found that Board members are well-intentioned, but at times lacking in the essential knowledge to oversee the District effectively. The District's effectiveness is further reduced by the distrust that has developed between the Board and staff. The Board is micro-managing the staff by making special requests for business e-mail, questioning typical and well-established business practices, and performing management tasks reserved for the General Manager. These behaviors have persisted through both permanent and temporary general managers and have created an unhealthy dynamic that undermines the District's service to its constituents. The Grand Jury recommends that the Board take certain measures to improve communications with staff. The Grand Jury recommends the Board utilize existing resources to support its need for improved management information.

Further, the Grand Jury found that the District's web page is inadequate and inefficient, and the lack of a website with a FAQ spot hinders communicating with ratepayers about common questions. The Grand Jury recommends that ECSD complete its webpage by the end of the calendar year.

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 Esparto Community Services District report and the eight 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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