



Orange County Human Relations Commission

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August 3, 2005

Frederick Horn, Presiding Judge
Orange County Grand Jury
700 Civic Center Dr
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Judge Horn and Grand Jury:

On behalf of the Orange County Human Relations Commission I write to give our response to Findings 7.1 and 7.2, and recommendations 8.1 and 8.2 of 2004-05 Grand Jury's report entitled, "Can Orange County Afford to Lose the Human Relations Commission?"

First let me say that the Commission was honored to be the subject of such a detailed review by the 2004-05 OC Grand Jury, and greatly appreciates the insightful "Observations" detailed in the report.

Grand Jury Findings:

7.1 County support: The Orange County Human Relations Commission needs the support of the county in order to service the entire populace, since problems develop regardless of city borders.

Commission Response: The commission concurs that the support of the county is essential in providing service to all county residents regardless of boundaries such as city limits, school district borders or other jurisdictional lines. Additionally, the appointment of 5 of the 11 commissioners by the Orange County Division of the League of California Cities is a wise way to reinforce the purview of the commission as serving all residents regardless of these jurisdictional lines.

7.2 Adequate and consistent funding: The Orange County Human Relations Commission needs adequate and consistent funds from the OC Board of Supervisors. The commission has truly strived to acquire city contributions and private donations, and it will continue to do so. However, the cities' contributions and other Human Relations Council contributions are unpredictable and can vary from year to year.

Commission Response: The commission concurs that adequate and consistent funding from the OC Board of Supervisors is critical to the stability and professionalism of the commission. The non-profit charity, that the commission created, enabled the cities, businesses, individuals, foundations and customers to fund critical human relations programs in this increasingly diverse community. These resources augment the core funding that the county provides, in fact they exceeded the county's General Fund allocation to the commission in 2004-05 by a factor of nearly five times. But these resources are inconsistent and an annual county funding base for the commission is a critical factor in maintaining this core county service.

Grand Jury Recommendations

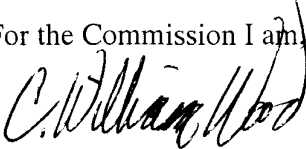
8.1 County support: The OC Board of Supervisors should support the Orange County Human Relations Commission to the degree that the commission: 1) remains under county auspices, and 2) retains its county, rather than private, identity.

Commission Response: The commission believes that the OC Board of Supervisors should maintain support of the commission as an important element of county government. This official public commission status communicates a message to the public that the County of Orange believes that building mutual understanding among our diverse communities and eliminating prejudice, intolerance and discrimination are important governmental responsibilities.

8.2 Adequate and consistent funding: The OC Board of Supervisors should budget consistent, annual financial support to the Orange County Human Relations Commission.

Commission Response: The commission concurs that the OC Board of Supervisors should budget consistent, annual financial support to the commission. The commission further suggests that an appropriate 2005-06 budget for the Commission would be \$410,000 per year. This would support the current 3 professional staff positions and overall budget without requiring the \$120,000 in outside donations to the county that are included in the 2005-06 commission budget.

The Orange County Human Relations Commission thanks the 2004-05 Orange County Grand Jury for these findings and recommendations aimed at preserving the important work of the commission. Just as storm drains need to be built before the storm hits, human relations infrastructure must be invested in before the conflict occurs. The relationships, model programs and reputation of the Orange County Human Relations Commission are in large part the human relations infrastructure of the county, and it needs regular attention and investment so that it is there when the crisis hits. We strive to bring people together around a vision of the future where ALL people are valued and included and our diversity is seen as a source of our strength.

For the Commission I am,


C. William Wood, Chair
Orange County Human Relations Commission