



County of Orange

County Executive Office

August 27, 2025

Honorable Maria D. Hernandez
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

Subject: "Hate: What is Orange County Doing About It?" Grand Jury Response

Dear Judge Hernandez:

Per your request, and in accordance with Penal Code 933, please find the County of Orange response to the subject report as approved by the Board of Supervisors.

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa Fernandez of the County Executive Office at 714-834-7219.

Sincerely,

Michelle Aguirre
Digitally signed by
Michelle Aguirre
Date: 2025.09.10
13:37:39 -07'00'

Michelle Aguirre
County Executive Officer

Enclosure

cc: 2024-25 Orange County Grand Jury Foreman
Jessica Witt, Chief Operating Officer
Lisa Fernandez, Assistant Chief Deputy Operating Officer
Elizabeth Guillen-Merchant, Assistant Chief Deputy Operating Officer

Responses to Findings and Recommendations 2024-25 Grand Jury Report:



Hate: What is Orange County Doing About It?

SUMMARY RESPONSE STATEMENT

On June 26, 2025, the Grand Jury released a report titled, "Hate: What is Orange County Doing About It?" This report includes findings and recommendations directed to the Orange County Board of Supervisors. Below are the responses.

FINDINGS AND RESPONSES

F1. In June 2024, the Orange County Board of Supervisors abruptly ended the County's partnership with Groundswell and significantly reduced the size, membership, and meeting frequency of the County Human Relations Commission—including the elimination of members representing cities and law enforcement—raising serious concerns about the County's commitment to addressing systemic bias, hate crimes, and discrimination.

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The Orange County Board of Supervisors (Board) did not renew the contract with Groundswell which ended on June 30, 2024, and instead directed that the Orange County Human Relations Commission (HRC) function be brought in-house to the County Executive Office. The Board created an ad hoc tasked with revisiting the HRC bylaws which were subsequently approved by the Board in January 2025. The County remains committed to addressing hate in Orange County.

F2. The Orange County Human Relations Commission's current methodology for compiling hate crime and incident statistics—relying only on reports from local law enforcement agencies—contributes to data incompleteness.

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

The 2023 Hate Crime Report, published in December 2024, used the California Department of Justice's Hate Crime report which allowed for a valid and reliable data set for the report. Currently, the HRC Ad Hoc is tasked with developing a methodology for the collection and reporting of hate incident data.

F3. While the California Department of Justice has already defined hate incidents, the Orange County Human Relations Commission has established an ad hoc committee to develop its own definition, which makes for data inconsistency and a diversion from the Commission's purpose.

Response: *Disagrees partially with the finding.*

The Orange County Human Relations Commission has created an ad hoc to address the methodology for reporting on hate incidents to allow for a valid, reliable, and consistent data reporting which will seek to address any potential duplication of reporting.

F4. Orange County lacks a centralized, coordinated, county-led system that unites all stakeholders to prevent and respond to hate crimes and incidents.

Response: *Disagrees wholly with the finding*

In 1971, the Orange County Board of Supervisors established the Orange County Human Relations Commission. As stated in its bylaws, the purpose of the HRC is to “Seek out the causes of tension and conflict, discrimination, and intolerance, based on race, religion, national origin, ethnicity, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, or marital status, and attempt to eliminate those causes.”

F5. Despite County and private efforts to combat hate activity, the African American and Jewish communities, two of the least populous demographics in Orange County, experience the highest number of hate crimes and incidents.

Response: *Disagrees partially with the finding.*

The 2023 Hate Crime Report did not report on hate incidents, however, it did reflect Anti-African American/Anti-Black bias (25) and Anti-Jewish bias (14) accounted for two of the top three most serious bias reported hate crime events in Orange County.

F6. Over the past three years, the Orange County Asian Pacific Islanders Community Alliance has implemented the State of California’s Department of Social Services’ “No Place for Hate” initiative. However, this grant funding expires in 2026, which will terminate this successful program.

Response: *Disagrees partially with the finding.*

This is not a County program, therefore the County is unable to respond as to the program’s success nor whether expiration of the grant funding will terminate the program.

F13. The grant from the U.S. Department of Justice secured by the Orange County District Attorney’s office aims to address and prevent hate crimes and incidents. This funding is scheduled to end on September 30, 2027, endangering this important program.

Response: *Agrees with the finding.*

RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSES

R1. The Orange County Board of Supervisors should allocate funding to ensure that the Orange County Asian Pacific Islanders Community Alliance efforts continue uninterrupted. This should be done by December 31, 2025, and yearly thereafter.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The County of Orange, as a policy, does not backfill programs that the State and Federal governments choose to no longer fund. Also, it is not clear that the OCAPICA program efforts will end.

R2. The Orange County Board of Supervisors should provide sufficient funding to the OCDA's office to continue its anti-hate crime and incident programs beyond its federal grant expiration date. This should be done by October 31, 2027, when the grant funding is scheduled to end, and yearly thereafter.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The County of Orange, as a policy, does not backfill programs that the State and Federal governments choose to no longer fund.

R3. The Orange County Board of Supervisors should restore the Human Relations Commission to its original eleven-member makeup that includes representatives from cities, and should reinstate their monthly meetings. This should be done by September 30, 2025.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The Board of Supervisors updated the HRC bylaws in January 2025, which included an update to the membership of the HRC and the meeting schedule. The bylaws are reviewed annually and adjustments can be made by the Board at that time. Also, a Board member can bring a bylaw change for reconsideration by the Board at any time.

R4. By August 31, 2025, and semiannually thereafter, the Orange County Board of Supervisors should request a status report from the Human Relations Commission on its activities and plans since the termination of its contract with Groundswell.

Response: *The recommendation has been implemented.*

The Board of Supervisors receives updates from the Human Relations Commission after each of its quarterly meetings and an annual Hate Crime Report is provided to the Board each year.

R5. The Board of Supervisors should direct the Human Relations Commission to form a Hate Prevention and Response Coalition modeled after the former Groundswell effort. To avoid duplication, boost impact, and gather better data, it should include representatives from cities, Sheriff's Department, District Attorney, schools, community groups, and affected residents. The coalition should create countywide hate crime protocols, support victims, promote inclusive education, and host public events. This should be done by September 30, 2025.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

As part of the District Attorney's Matthew Shephard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Education, Investigation and Prosecution Program Grant from the Department of Justice, "Community education will be a key function of this project as many victims of hate crimes are reluctant to come forward because they belong to marginalized groups or have marginalized identities. The hate crimes prosecutor will increase public awareness of this topic by holding regular community meetings and giving presentations to various communities across Orange County, resulting in an outcome where marginalized individuals will feel empowered to come forward if they are a victim of or witness to a hate crime. Educational presentations will also be given to local universities to assist with upstream prevention. Law enforcement/practitioner trainings would include tools, policies, and procedures designed to increase the reporting, identification, and charging of hate crime, including victim reporting."

R7. To ensure consistency and better understanding of what constitutes a hate incident, the Board of Supervisors should direct the Orange County Human Relations Commission to adopt definitions as defined by the California Justice Department. This should be done by September 30, 2025.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

At the direction of the Board of Supervisors, the HRC Ad Hoc is already working on a definition and a methodology for tracking and reporting on hate incidents.

R8. The Orange County Sheriff's Department should expand representation within each faith, including multiple congregations, to ensure a broader and more inclusive interfaith collaborative. This should be done by December 31, 2025.

Response: *The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable.*

The Orange County Sheriff's Department leads the Interfaith Collaborative, not the Board of Supervisors.

ORANGE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

MINUTE ORDER

August 26, 2025

Submitting Agency/Department: County Executive Office

Approve proposed response to FY 2024-25 Grand Jury Report "Hate: What is Orange County Doing About It?" - All Districts

The following is action taken by the Board of Supervisors:

APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☒ OTHER ☐

Unanimous ☒ (1) NGUYEN: Y (2) SARMIENTO: Y (3) WAGNER: Y (4) CHAFFEE: Y (5) FOLEY: Y

Vote Key: Y=Yes; N=No; A=Abstain; X=Excused; B.O.=Board Order

Documents accompanying this matter:

- ☐ Resolution(s)
- ☐ Ordinances(s)
- ☐ Contract(s)

Item No. 34

Special Notes:

Copies sent to:

CEO – Jessica Witt
Superior Court
Grand Jury

9/18/25



I certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the Minute Order adopted by the Board of Supervisors, Orange County, State of California.
Robin Stieler, Clerk of the Board

By: _____

Deputy



Agenda Item

AGENDA STAFF REPORT

ASR Control 25-000607

MEETING DATE: 08/26/25
LEGAL ENTITY TAKING ACTION: Board of Supervisors
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DISTRICT(S): All Districts
SUBMITTING AGENCY/DEPARTMENT: County Executive Office (Approved)
DEPARTMENT CONTACT PERSON(S): Michelle Aguirre (714) 834-4304
Jessica Witt (714) 748-7219

SUBJECT: "Hate: What is Orange County Doing About It?" Grand Jury Response

CEO CONCUR Concur	COUNTY COUNSEL REVIEW No Legal Objection	CLERK OF THE BOARD Discussion 3 Votes Board Majority
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Budgeted: N/A **Current Year Cost:** N/A **Annual Cost:** N/A

Staffing Impact: No **# of Positions:** **Sole Source:** N/A

Current Fiscal Year Revenue: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

County Audit in last 3 years: No

Levine Act Review Completed: N/A

Prior Board Action: N/A

RECOMMENDED ACTION(S):

1. Approve proposed response to FY 2024-25 Grand Jury Report entitled, "Hate: What is Orange County Doing About It?"
2. Direct the Clerk of the Board to forward this Agenda Staff Report with attachments to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court and the FY 2024-25 Grand Jury no later than September 24, 2025.

SUMMARY:

Approval of proposed response to FY 2024-25 Grand Jury Report entitled "Hate: What is Orange County Doing About It?" will fulfill the County's required response to the Grand Jury.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On June 26, 2025, the Orange County Grand Jury released a report entitled "Hate: What is Orange County Doing About It?" The report directed responses to findings and recommendations to the Orange County Board of Supervisors. Attachment B is the County's proposed response to the Grand Jury.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

N/A

STAFFING IMPACT:

N/A

ATTACHMENT(S):

Attachment A - Grand Jury Report

Attachment B - Draft Response

Attachment C - Draft Transmittal Letter