

2025 RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: **Humboldt County Sheriff's Office – Locked Up, But Not Locked Out: Inmate voting rights in Humboldt County**

Report Date: June 2025

Response by: W. Honsal, Sheriff, County of Humboldt

FINDINGS

See Following Pages

RECOMMENDATIONS

See following pages

Date: 9/5/25

Signed: W. Honsal

Number of pages attached: 2

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE SUMMARY STATEMENT

Finding 1:

Voting procedures in the jail have improved, resulting in a record number of inmates voting.

Response: Agree

Finding 2:

General Election material is readily available to inmates, encouraging greater participation.

Response: Agree

Finding 3:

There is good coordination between the Office of Elections and the Sheriff's Office Correctional Facility staff. This allowed inmates to become better informed about candidates and issues that appeared on the ballot.

Response: Agree

Finding 4:

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office Correctional Facility is in the process of developing an Elections Manual to preserve and record effective inmate voting procedures for future guidance.

Response: Agree

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1:

The Humboldt County Sheriff's office prepare an Elections Manual to be approved and adopted by the Sheriff for use at the Humboldt County Correctional Facility, by no later than December 31, 2025.

The recommendation has been implemented.

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office has created a three-page Elections Manual outlining the process by which inmates at the Humboldt County Correctional Facility may register and vote. The manual explains that this process is coordinated by Programs staff in partnership with the Humboldt County Office of Elections (HCOE). Registration forms must be completed in pen, with medical accommodations provided if necessary. Staff are required to log each registration, provide a receipt to the inmate, and submit the forms via outgoing mail. Prior to elections, Programs staff collect voter materials from HCOE, ensure distribution to housing units, and obtain same-day registration envelopes after the mail-in deadline. On Election Day, staff confirm ballot delivery, set up privacy barriers, and facilitate voting in both dorm and celled units, using general ballots when appropriate. After voting, ballots are sealed in registration envelopes, and staff update the Jail Management Records System with each inmate's voting status, ensuring that only eligible individuals' ballots are submitted. Valid ballots are then delivered to HCOE for processing.

2025 RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: **Humboldt County Sheriff's Office – Coroner: Serving the Community, Involving the Community**

Report Date: June 2025

Response by: W. Honsal, Sheriff, County of Humboldt

FINDINGS

See Following Pages

RECOMMENDATIONS

See following pages

Date: 9/5/25

Signed: W. Honsal

Number of pages attached: 3

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE SUMMARY STATEMENT

FINDINGS:

Finding 1:

The Coroner's Office staff and volunteers perform exemplary service and maintain investigational integrity while operating in an antiquated, undersized, and poorly maintained facility. Providing this professional and respectful service benefits the community, deceased individuals, and their families.

Response: Agree

Finding 2:

The Coroner's Office staff and volunteers perform exemplary service and maintain investigational integrity while operating under severe budget and resource constraints. Providing this professional and respectful service benefits the community, deceased individuals, and their families.

Response: Agree

Finding 3:

The Coroner's Office relies substantially on volunteers, who collectively contributed 4,722 volunteer hours in 2024. This generated significant cost savings for the County while providing valuable training and experience to local medical students.

Response: Agree

Finding 4:

Dedicated staff have successfully produced a comprehensive 86-page Humboldt County Coroner's Office Policy & Procedures Manual. This manual will standardize practices, inform employees of policies, and serve as an operational reference guide.

Response: Agree

Finding 5:

The Humboldt County Coroner's Register is maintained in both physical and digital formats. This enables efficient report generation from the digital version.

Response: Agree

Finding 6:

Safety Data Sheets for formaldehyde and other chemicals are readily available to the Coroners' Office staff. This provides immediate access to safety protocols and ensures compliance with California Division of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) requirements.

Response: Agree

Finding 7:

A Sheriff's Office Property Technician has dedicated nine months to cataloging and organizing the evidence room to facilitate record digitization. The digital database will enhance record retrieval, sharing, and storage efficiency and reliability.

Response: Agree

Finding 8:

The existing counter surfaces and cabinets in the Coroner's Office autopsy room are permeable, deteriorating, and fail to comply with National Association of Medical Examiners standards. This creates safety risks and contamination hazards.

Response: Agree

Finding 9:

The Coroner's Office evidence/storage room access is controlled by a single code shared among all staff. The inability to identify specific room access creates risks of tampering, contamination, or loss of records, forensic evidence, cremated remains, and decedents' personal property.

Response: Agree

RECOMMENDATIONS:**R1:**

The Humboldt County Sheriff / Coroner's Division complete the cataloging and organization of the evidence/storage room and enter all property information into a digital file record system by April 1, 2026.

The recommendation will be implemented by the April 2026 recommendation.

The Sheriff's Office Property Technicians are diligently working to catalog and organize the evidence and storage facility, ensuring that all pertinent information is accurately entered into the RIMS digital records system.

R2:

The Humboldt County Sheriff replace counter surfaces and cabinets with stainless steel or other non-permeable surfacing materials by January 1, 2026.

The recommendation will be implemented as soon as funding can be identified.

Stainless steel countertops are ideal for the Coroner's Office autopsy room because they provide a durable, non-porous, and easily sanitized surface that withstands harsh chemicals and high use, ensuring the highest standards of hygiene, safety, and longevity in a critical medical environment.

R3:

The Humboldt County Sheriff installs a locking system on the evidence/storage room door by October 15, 2025, that differentiates between users, records date and time of entry/exit, and identifies everyone accessing the room.

The recommendation will be implemented as soon as County Public Works RFP determines a contractor to conduct the work.

Public Works is in the RFP process to determine the who will be the contractor that will install and manage the keyless entry/exit systems for the county.

2025 RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT

Report Title: Humboldt County Animal Shelter

Report Date: June 2025

Response by: W. Honsal, Sheriff, County of Humboldt

FINDINGS

See Following Pages

RECOMMENDATIONS

See following pages

Date: 8/18/25

Signed: W. Honsal

Number of pages attached: 2

RESPONSE TO GRAND JURY REPORT – RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE SUMMARY STATEMENT

FINDINGS:

Finding 1: The staff of the Humboldt County Animal Shelter are dedicated. Their efforts allow them to work effectively under the stress of handling high volumes of animals with less than a full staff.

Response: Agree

Finding 2: Collaboration between the Animal Shelter and the local benefit our community.

Response: Agree

Finding 3: Volunteers donate approximately 400 hours per month. Their crucial contribution to animal enrichment by socializing, walking, and training animals is a factor in increasing adoptions and meeting other needs of the Animal Shelter.

Response: Agree

Finding 4: Long-standing leaks have led to a severely damaged roof that houses necessary mechanical equipment for the Animal Shelter. This damage can significantly impact staff and animal health and safety.

Response: Agree

Finding 5: The outside lighting at the Animal Shelter needs replacement and repair; this poses a safety concern for both staff and visitors, especially during the winter hours.

Response: Agree

Finding 6: The Animal Shelter is only open to the public from Monday to Friday. Offering operational hours on the weekend would increase the rate of adoptions.

Response: Agree

RECOMMENDATIONS:

R1: Collaboration between the Animal Shelter and the animal rescue network, in a professional and respectful manner, should continue as it is beneficial to the animals and everyone involved.

The recommendation has been implemented.

The Humboldt County Animal Shelter is grateful for the dedication of our volunteers, animal rescue partners, and foster care providers. Together, this animal loving network plays a crucial role in helping us keep euthanasia rates low and ensuring the animals in our care have the best possible chance for a loving home. The Sheriff's Office is proud of these strong partnerships, and we remain committed to working hand in hand with our community. Through responsible pet ownership, including spaying and neutering, we can continue to reduce overpopulation and create a healthier, safer environment for animals across Humboldt County.

R5: The Animal Shelter includes weekend hours by no later than September 1, 2025.

The recommendation has already been implemented.

The Animal Shelter is now open on the weekend. The Shelter is open Monday-Saturday, closed Sunday and Holidays. The Saturday hours are 10am-4pm. We believe more people will adopt animals on the weekends. Thus, the change was made earlier in the year.