

Chapter 10.27 RCW
GRAND JURIES—CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

Sections

- 10.27.010 Short title—Purpose.
- 10.27.020 Definitions.
- 10.27.030 Summoning grand jury.
- 10.27.040 Selection of grand jury members.
- 10.27.050 Special inquiry judge—Selection.
- 10.27.060 Discharge of panel, juror—Grounds.
- 10.27.070 Oath—Officers—Witnesses.
- 10.27.080 Persons authorized to attend—Restrictions on attorneys.
- 10.27.090 Secrecy enjoined—Exceptions—Use and availability of evidence.
- 10.27.100 Inquiry as to offenses—Duties—Investigation.
- 10.27.110 Duration of sessions—Extensions.
- 10.27.120 Self-incrimination—Right to counsel.
- 10.27.130 Self-incrimination—Refusal to testify or give evidence—Procedure.
- 10.27.140 Witnesses—Attendance.
- 10.27.150 Indictments—Issuance.
- 10.27.160 Grand jury report.
- 10.27.170 Special inquiry judge—Petition for order—Investigation of sexual exploitation of children.
- 10.27.180 Special inquiry judge—Disqualification from subsequent proceedings.
- 10.27.190 Special inquiry judge—Direction to public attorney for proceedings in another county—Procedure.

Interpreters—Legal proceedings: Chapter 2.42 RCW.

Juries: Chapter 2.36 RCW.

RCW 10.27.010 Short title—Purpose. This chapter shall be known as the criminal investigatory act of 1971 and is enacted on behalf of the people of the state of Washington to serve law enforcement in combating crime and corruption. [1971 ex.s. c 67 s 1.]

RCW 10.27.020 Definitions. For the purposes of this chapter:

(1) The term "court" shall mean any superior court in the state of Washington.

(2) The term "public attorney" shall mean the prosecuting attorney of the county in which a grand jury or special grand jury is impaneled; the attorney general of the state of Washington when acting pursuant to RCW 10.27.070(9) and, the special prosecutor appointed by the governor, pursuant to RCW 10.27.070(10), and their deputies or special deputies.

(3) The term "indictment" shall mean a written accusation found by a grand jury.

(4) The term "principal" shall mean any person whose conduct is being investigated by a grand jury or special inquiry judge.

(5) The term "witness" shall mean any person summoned to appear before a grand jury or special inquiry judge to answer questions or produce evidence.

(6) A "grand jury" consists of twelve persons, is impaneled by a superior court and constitutes a part of such court. The functions of a grand jury are to hear, examine and investigate evidence concerning criminal activity and corruption and to take action with respect to such evidence. The grand jury shall operate as a whole and not by committee.

(7) A "special inquiry judge" is a superior court judge designated by a majority of the superior court judges of a county to hear and receive evidence of crime and corruption. [1988 c 188 s 16; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 2.]

Legislative findings—Severability—Effective date—1988 c 188:

See notes following RCW 2.36.010.

RCW 10.27.030 Summoning grand jury. No grand jury shall be summoned to attend at the superior court of any county except upon an order signed by a majority of the judges thereof. A grand jury shall be summoned by the court, where the public interest so demands, whenever in its opinion there is sufficient evidence of criminal activity or corruption within the county or whenever so requested by a public attorney, corporation counsel or city attorney upon showing of good cause. [1971 ex.s. c 67 s 3.]

RCW 10.27.040 Selection of grand jury members. Members of the grand jury shall be selected in the manner provided in chapter 2.36 RCW. [1988 c 188 s 17; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 4.]

Legislative findings—Severability—Effective date—1988 c 188:

See notes following RCW 2.36.010.

RCW 10.27.050 Special inquiry judge—Selection. In every county a superior court judge as designated by a majority of the judges shall be available to serve as a special inquiry judge to hear evidence concerning criminal activity and corruption. [1971 ex.s. c 67 s 5.]

RCW 10.27.060 Discharge of panel, juror—Grounds. Neither the grand jury panel nor any individual grand juror may be challenged, but the court may:

(1) At any time before a grand jury is sworn discharge the panel and summon another if it finds that the original panel does not substantially conform to the requirements of chapter 2.36 RCW; or

(2) At any time after a grand juror is drawn, refuse to swear him or her, or discharge him or her after he or she has been sworn, upon a finding that he or she is disqualified from service pursuant to chapter 2.36 RCW, or incapable of performing his or her duties because of bias or prejudice, or guilty of misconduct in the performance of his or her duties such as to impair the proper functioning of the grand jury. [2010 c 8 s 1018; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 6.]

RCW 10.27.070 Oath—Officers—Witnesses. (1) When the grand jury is impaneled, the court shall appoint one of the jurors to be foreperson, and also another of the jurors to act as foreperson in case of the absence of the foreperson.

(2) The grand jurors must be sworn pursuant to the following oath: "You, as grand jurors for the county of, do solemnly swear (or affirm) that you will diligently inquire into and true presentment make of all such matters and things as shall come to your knowledge and you will submit things truly as they come to your knowledge, according to your charge the laws of this state and your understanding; you shall indict no person through envy, hatred, malice or political consideration; neither will you leave any person unindicted through fear, favor, affection, reward or the hope thereof or political consideration. The counsel of the state, his or her advice, and that of your fellows you shall keep secret."

(3) After a grand jury has been sworn, the court must deliver or cause to be delivered to each grand juror a printed copy of all the provisions of this chapter, and the court may give the grand jurors any oral or written instructions, or both, relating to the proper performance of their duties at any time it deems necessary or appropriate.

(4) The court shall appoint a reporter to record the proceedings before the grand jury or special inquiry judge, and shall swear him or her not to disclose any testimony or the name of any witness except as provided in RCW 10.27.090. In addition, the foreperson of the grand jury may, in his or her discretion, select one of the grand jurors to act as secretary to keep records of the grand jury's business.

(5) The court, whenever necessary, shall appoint an interpreter, and shall swear him or her not to disclose any testimony or the name of any witness except as provided in RCW 10.27.090.

(6) When a person held in official custody is a witness before a grand jury or special inquiry judge, a public servant, assigned to guard him or her during his or her appearance may accompany him or her. The court shall swear such public servant not to disclose any testimony or the name of any witness except as provided in RCW 10.27.090.

(7) Proceedings of a grand jury shall not be valid unless at least twelve of its members are present. The foreperson or acting foreperson of the grand jury shall conduct proceedings in an orderly manner and shall administer an oath or affirmation in the manner prescribed by law to any witness who shall testify before the grand jury.

(8) The legal advisers of a grand jury are the court and public attorneys, and a grand jury may not seek or receive legal advice from any other source. When necessary or appropriate, the court or public attorneys or both must instruct the grand jury concerning the law with respect to its duties or any matter before it, and such instructions shall be recorded by the reporter.

(9) (a) Upon request of the prosecuting attorney of the county in which a grand jury or special inquiry judge is impaneled, the attorney general shall assist such prosecuting attorney in attending such grand jury or special inquiry judge.

(b) Whenever directed by the court, the attorney general shall supersede the prosecuting attorney in attending the grand jury and in which event the attorney general shall be responsible for the prosecution of any indictment returned by the grand jury.

(c) When the attorney general is conducting a criminal investigation pursuant to powers otherwise granted to him or her, he or she shall attend all grand juries or special inquiry judges in relation thereto and shall prosecute any indictments returned by a grand jury.

(10) After consulting with the court and receiving its approval, the grand jury may request the governor to appoint a special prosecutor to attend the grand jury. The grand jury shall in the request nominate three persons approved by the court. From those nominated, the governor shall appoint a special prosecutor, who shall supersede the prosecuting attorney and the attorney general and who shall be responsible for the prosecution of any indictments returned by the grand jury attended by him or her.

(11) A public attorney shall attend the grand jurors when requested by them, and he or she may do so on his or her own motion within the limitations of RCW 10.27.020(2), 10.27.070(9) and 10.27.070(10) hereof, for the purpose of examining witnesses in their presence, or of giving the grand jurors legal advice regarding any matter cognizable by them. He or she shall also, when requested by them, draft indictments and issue process for the attendance of witnesses.

(12) Subject to the approval of the court, the corporation counsel or city attorney for any city or town in the county where any grand jury has been convened may appear as a witness before the grand jury to advise the grand jury of any criminal activity or corruption within his or her jurisdiction. [2010 c 8 s 1019; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 7.]

RCW 10.27.080 Persons authorized to attend—Restrictions on attorneys. No person shall be present at sessions of the grand jury or special inquiry judge except the witness under examination and his or her attorney, public attorneys, the reporter, an interpreter, a public servant guarding a witness who has been held in custody, if any, and, for the purposes provided for in RCW 10.27.170, any corporation counsel or city attorney. The attorney advising the witness shall only advise such witness concerning his or her right to answer or not answer any questions and the form of his or her answer and shall not otherwise engage in the proceedings. No person other than grand jurors shall be present while the grand jurors are deliberating or voting. Any person violating either of the above provisions may be held in contempt of court. [2010 c 8 s 1020; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 8.]

RCW 10.27.090 Secrecy enjoined—Exceptions—Use and availability of evidence. (1) Every member of the grand jury shall keep secret whatever he, she, or any other grand juror has said, and how he, she, or any other grand juror has voted, except for disclosure of indictments, if any, as provided in RCW 10.27.150.

(2) No grand juror shall be permitted to state or testify in any court how he, she, or any other grand juror voted on any question before them or what opinion was expressed by himself, herself, or any other grand juror regarding such question.

(3) No grand juror, public or private attorney, city attorney or corporation counsel, reporter, interpreter or public servant who held

a witness in custody before a grand jury or special inquiry judge, or witness, principal or other person shall disclose the testimony of a witness examined before the grand jury or special inquiry judge or other evidence received by it, except when required by the court to disclose the testimony of the witness examined before the grand jury or special inquiry judge for the purpose of ascertaining whether it is consistent with that of the witness given before the court, or to disclose his or her testimony given before the grand jury or special inquiry judge by any person upon a charge against such person for perjury in giving his or her testimony or upon trial therefor, or when permitted by the court in furtherance of justice.

(4) The public attorney shall have access to all grand jury and special inquiry judge evidence and may introduce such evidence before any other grand jury or any trial in which the same may be relevant.

(5) The court upon a showing of good cause may make any or all grand jury or special inquiry judge evidence available to any other public attorney, prosecuting attorney, city attorney or corporation counsel upon proper application and with the concurrence of the public attorney attending such grand jury. Any witness' testimony, given before a grand jury or a special inquiry judge and relevant to any subsequent proceeding against the witness, shall be made available to the witness upon proper application to the court. The court may also, upon proper application and upon a showing of good cause, make available to a defendant in a subsequent criminal proceeding other testimony or evidence:

(a) When given or presented before a special inquiry judge, if doing so is in the furtherance of justice; or

(b) When given or presented before a grand jury, if the court finds that doing so is necessary to prevent an injustice and that there is no reason to believe that doing so would endanger the life or safety of any witness or his or her family. The cost of any such transcript made available shall be borne by the applicant. [2010 c 8 s 1021; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 9.]

RCW 10.27.100 Inquiry as to offenses—Duties—Investigation. The grand jurors shall inquire into every offense triable within the county for which any person has been held to answer, if an indictment has not been found or an information filed in such case, and all other indictable offenses within the county which are presented to them by a public attorney or otherwise come to their knowledge. If a grand juror knows or has reason to believe that an indictable offense, triable within the county, has been committed, he or she shall declare such a fact to his or her fellow jurors who may begin an investigation. In such investigation the grand juror may be sworn as a witness. [2010 c 8 s 1022; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 10.]

RCW 10.27.110 Duration of sessions—Extensions. The length of time which a grand jury may sit after being convened shall not exceed sixty days. Before expiration of the sixty day period and any extensions, and upon showing of good cause, the court may order the grand jury panel extended for a period not to exceed sixty days. [1971 ex.s. c 67 s 11.]

RCW 10.27.120 Self-incrimination—Right to counsel. Any individual called to testify before a grand jury or special inquiry judge, whether as a witness or principal, if not represented by an attorney appearing with the witness before the grand jury or special inquiry judge, must be told of his or her privilege against self-incrimination. Such an individual has a right to representation by an attorney to advise him or her as to his or her rights, obligations, and duties before the grand jury or special inquiry judge, and must be informed of this right. The attorney may be present during all proceedings attended by his or her client unless immunity has been granted pursuant to RCW 10.27.130. After immunity has been granted, such an individual may leave the grand jury room to confer with his or her attorney. [2010 c 8 s 1023; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 12.]

RCW 10.27.130 Self-incrimination—Refusal to testify or give evidence—Procedure. If in any proceedings before a grand jury or special inquiry judge, a person refuses, or indicates in advance a refusal, to testify or provide evidence of any other kind on the ground that he or she may be incriminated thereby, and if a public attorney requests the court to order that person to testify or provide the evidence, the court shall then hold a hearing and shall so order unless it finds that to do so would be clearly contrary to the public interest, and that person shall comply with the order. The hearing shall be subject to the provisions of RCW 10.27.080 and 10.27.090, unless the witness shall request that the hearing be public.

If, but for this section, he or she would have been privileged to withhold the answer given or the evidence produced by him or her, the witness may not refuse to comply with the order on the basis of his or her privilege against self-incrimination; but he or she shall not be prosecuted or subjected to criminal penalty or forfeiture for or on account of any transaction, matter, or fact concerning which he or she has been ordered to testify pursuant to this section. He or she may nevertheless be prosecuted for failing to comply with the order to answer, or for perjury or for offering false evidence to the grand jury. [2010 c 8 s 1024; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 13.]

RCW 10.27.140 Witnesses—Attendance. (1) Except as provided in this section, no person has the right to appear as a witness in a grand jury or special inquiry judge proceeding.

(2) A public attorney may call as a witness in a grand jury or special inquiry judge proceeding any person believed by him or her to possess information or knowledge relevant thereto and may issue legal process and subpoena to compel his or her attendance and the production of evidence.

(3) The grand jury or special inquiry judge may cause to be called as a witness any person believed by it to possess relevant information or knowledge. If the grand jury or special inquiry judge desires to hear any such witness who was not called by a public attorney, it may direct a public attorney to issue and serve a subpoena upon such witness and the public attorney must comply with such direction. At any time after service of such subpoena and before the return date thereof, however, the public attorney may apply to the court which impaneled the grand jury for an order vacating or modifying the subpoena on the grounds that such is in the public

interest. Upon such application, the court may in its discretion vacate the subpoena, extend its return date, attach reasonable conditions to directions, or make such other qualification thereof as is appropriate.

(4) The proceedings to summon a person and compel him or her to testify or provide evidence shall as far as possible be the same as proceedings to summon witnesses and compel their attendance. Such persons shall receive only those fees paid witnesses in superior court criminal trials. [2010 c 8 s 1025; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 14.]

RCW 10.27.150 Indictments—Issuance. After hearing, examining, and investigating the evidence before it, a grand jury may, in its discretion, issue an indictment against a principal. A grand jury shall find an indictment only when from all the evidence at least three-fourths of the jurors are convinced that there is probable cause to believe a principal is guilty of a criminal offense. When an indictment is found by a grand jury the foreperson or acting foreperson shall present it to the court. [2010 c 8 s 1026; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 15.]

RCW 10.27.160 Grand jury report. The grand jury may prepare its conclusions, recommendations and suggestions in the form of a grand jury report. Such report shall be released to the public only upon a determination by a majority of the judges of the superior court of the county court that (1) the findings in the report deal with matters of broad public policy affecting the public interest and do not identify or criticize any individual; (2) the release of the report would be consistent with the public interest and further the ends of justice; and (3) release of the report would not prejudice any pending criminal investigation or trial. [1971 ex.s. c 67 s 16.]

RCW 10.27.170 Special inquiry judge—Petition for order—Investigation of sexual exploitation of children. (1) When any public attorney, corporation counsel or city attorney has reason to suspect crime or corruption, within the jurisdiction of such attorney, and there is reason to believe that there are persons who may be able to give material testimony or provide material evidence concerning such suspected crime or corruption, such attorney may petition the judge designated as a special inquiry judge pursuant to RCW 10.27.050 for an order directed to such persons commanding them to appear at a designated time and place in said county and to then and there answer such questions concerning the suspected crime or corruption as the special inquiry judge may approve, or provide evidence as directed by the special inquiry judge.

(2) Upon petition of a prosecuting attorney for the establishment of a special inquiry judge proceeding in an investigation of sexual exploitation of children under RCW 10.112.010, the court shall establish the special inquiry judge proceeding, if appropriate, as soon as practicable but no later than seventy-two hours after the filing of the petition. [2017 c 114 s 3; 1971 ex.s. c 67 s 17.]

Findings—2017 c 114: See note following RCW 10.112.010.

RCW 10.27.180 Special inquiry judge—Disqualification from subsequent proceedings. The judge serving as a special inquiry judge shall be disqualified from acting as a magistrate or judge in any subsequent court proceeding arising from such inquiry except alleged contempt for neglect or refusal to appear, testify or provide evidence at such inquiry in response to an order, summons or subpoena. [1971 ex.s. c 67 s 18.]

RCW 10.27.190 Special inquiry judge—Direction to public attorney for proceedings in another county—Procedure. Upon petition of a public attorney to the special inquiry judge that there is reason to suspect that there exists evidence of crime and corruption in another county, and with the concurrence of the special inquiry judge and prosecuting attorney of the other county, the special inquiry judge may direct the public attorney to attend and participate in special inquiry judge proceedings in the other county held to inquire into crime and corruption which relates to crime or corruption under investigation in the initiating county. The proceedings of such special inquiry judge may be transcribed, certified and filed in the county of the public attorney's jurisdiction at the expense of that county. [1971 ex.s. c 67 s 19.]