The Bright Light of Legislative Oversight

As I plunge into my new role as chairperson of the Court Reporters Board (CRB), my first challenge is the Board’s sunset review. Under current law the CRB is scheduled to sunset on January 1, 2017. Like many other boards, the CRB is responsible for licensing and disciplining professionals, and the Legislature takes a keen interest in making sure that California’s boards and bureaus are held accountable to the public. Through the sunset review process, the Legislature examines all aspects of a board’s performance since the last review.

Specifically, the CRB will submit a report to the Senate Business, Professions and Economic Development Committee as well as the Assembly Business and Professions Committee. The report submitted will document everything from Board member attendance to summaries of enforcement actions, licensing statistics and staffing changes.

A key element of the report is the opportunity to share major industry issues or trends. For instance, the CRB Sunset Review Report will include information on the changing demographics of the industry. It doesn’t take a great mathematician to compare the number of retiring court reporters to the number of new licensees and recognize a coming shortage. A related workforce issue is the inefficiency that has resulted from the privatization of the state’s civil courtrooms. Instead of the court hiring one court reporter to cover the entire day’s calendar of proceedings, individual litigants are required to hire their own court reporter, often resulting in multiple court reporters awaiting their turn to set up and report one particular part of the day’s calendar. A shortage of court reporters will not only make it more difficult for a litigant to hire a reporter, but will also drive up appearance fees.
The report will also include consumer protection issues such as court reporting firms that assert they are not required to follow the laws and regulations related to court reporting, which has resulted in overbilling and cost shifting. This is another direct hit to the pocketbooks of consumers and can’t continue.

After the report is submitted to the oversight committees, legislative staff will analyze the report and follow up with the Board with any questions. Following that, most probably in the spring, the committees will hold a public hearing to discuss whether to extend the Board and if so for how long.

The central issue that the Legislature will consider during its review of the Board is whether the Board should continue to regulate court reporters, if it should be terminated, or sunset. If the Board were to be sunset, it would move from a board structure to a bureau, still under the auspices of the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA). The main difference between a board and a bureau is that under the structure of a bureau, a bureau chief is in charge and reports to the director of DCA. In bureaus, many decisions are made via a closed-door administrative management structure that ultimately stops with the Governor. In contrast, under a board structure, board members are appointed by the Legislature, and its meetings are held in public in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

While the sunset review process may be arduous, the process mitigates two ongoing challenges: one, how to ensure the Board is really protecting the public and not the court reporting profession and, two, how to ensure that the Board is taking all the necessary actions to maximum consumer protection. For these reasons, it's imperative that the bright light of legislative oversight in the form of sunset review requires the Board to really scrutinize itself. We are confident the Board will withstand the intense scrutiny of its actions and will be allowed to continue its mission of protecting California consumers through the oversight of the court reporting profession.

Licensees Encouraged to Renew Early

Avoid Unnecessary Delays in Your Renewal

The Department of Consumer Affairs is scheduled to transition Boards and Bureaus in Release 2 to the new BreEZe online licensing and enforcement system in January 2016.

Although the Court Reporters Board is in Release 3, the transition to the new system will require a temporary shutdown of all licensing processes for several business days and could result in delays in processing license renewals and changes to names and addresses.

Individuals holding a professional license with December 2015 or January 2016 expiration dates who wish to renew their licenses are strongly encouraged to renew as early as possible, preferably before the end of November 2015.

For more information, visit www.dca.ca.gov/about_dca/breeze/index.shtml. Questions about BreEZe can be e-mailed to BreEZe@dca.ca.gov.
Legislative Update:

Governor signs AB 1197 but vetoes AB 804

On Monday, September 28, 2015, Governor Edmond G. Brown Jr. announced he had signed AB 1197 by Assemblymember Susan Bonilla (D-Concord). The new law will require deposition notices to include a statement disclosing the existence of any known contractual relations, if any, between the deposition officer or entity providing the services of the deposition officer and the party noticing the deposition or a third party who is financing all or part of the action.

The Governor also announced he had vetoed AB 804 by Assemblymember Roger Hernandez (D-West Covina). This bill would have required mandatory continuing education as a condition for renewing the licensure for court reporters.

Best Practice Pointers Task Force Update

As reported in our Spring 2015 CRB Today newsletter, the Best Practice Pointers Task Force developed four pointers at its April 11, 2015 inaugural meeting. Those pointers were then presented to the Board on June 26, 2015, where they were individually approved. “The pointers are concise and clearly written,” commented Board Member Elizabeth Lasensky.

As a result, the four pointers were placed on the Board’s Web site, and an electronic notice was sent out alerting the Board’s subscribers that they could find the pointers by visiting http://www.courtreportersboard.ca.gov/licensees/index.shtml. In addition, Best Practice Pointer No. 3 – Videotaped Depositions will be sent as an insert in the renewal notices.

The task force met again over the summer on July 25, 2015, with members Diane Freeman, Stacy Gaskill, Melinda Nelson and Kelly Shainline. As a result, six more pointers were developed. “We had a goal of drafting the top 10 best practice pointers for 2015, and I am pleased to report we met that target,” stated Task Force and Board Chair Davina Hurt.

The newly composed pointers will be presented to the Board at the October 30, 2015 Board meeting. The subject titles are as follows:

No. 5 – Confidential Depositions
No. 6 – Court Transcripts Designated Confidential or Under Seal
No. 7 – Subcontractor Agreements
No. 8 – Swearing in Witness Mid-Proceeding
No. 9 – Leaving Rough Draft for Jury Readback
No. 10 – Reporter Conduct for Readback in the Jury Room

As a reminder, best practice pointers are not regulations or statutorily mandated, but rather a way for the Board to provide guidance. The Board will not use them as a basis for discipline or enforcement of any type.

If anyone has a topic they would like to see the task force address, please contact Paula Bruning at Paula.Bruning@dca.ca.gov.
CSRs Needed for Exam Workshops

If you currently work as a CSR and your license is in good standing, we need you. The CSR exam development process involves a series of workshops that requires active CSR participation. Without valuable subject matter expert input, the workshops cannot take place, and without a good supply of test questions in the test bank, the CRB will not be able to continue to offer the written exam three times per year.

For the health and growth of the industry, please consider accessing the CRB calendar at www.courtreportersboard.ca.gov to see if any of the upcoming exam workshop dates might work for you. Each two-day workshop is held from Friday to Saturday in Sacramento. All travel accommodations are arranged by CRB staff. All workshop participants will be provided with a per diem rate of $150 per day. Those living farther than 50 miles will be reimbursed for hotel accommodations at the State approved rate.

Please pass this important message on to reporters you know. The future success of the CSR industry lies with you. For more information on participating in an exam workshop, contact Kim Kale at Kim.Kale@dca.ca.gov.

Save the Date

Calling all Argonaut Alumni!

Get ready to celebrate Argonaut’s 50th Anniversary Celebration Gatsby style, April 16, 2016. For more information, please contact Bonnie Comstock at Bonnie-Comstock@scusd.edu. Check Argonaut’s Facebook page, CAJ Argonaut Court Reporting, for updates. We need to hear from you! You won’t want to miss this lavish soiree!
The Court Reporters Board of California is pleased to welcome the following people to the rolls of licensed California court reporters:

- Laural Katherine Bergenholtz, Shingle Springs, CA, CSR 14050
- Melinda Cabello, Tulare, CA, CSR 14045
- Maritza Castro, Indio, CA, CSR 14049
- Baylie Churchman, Bakersfield, CA, CSR 14061
- Jesslyn B. Clark, Hanford, CA, CSR 14054
- Hector Contreras, Loomis, CA, CSR 14051
- Dahlisha Cullors, Yucaipa, CA, CSR 14048
- Sabrina Ariel Guzman, Orange, CA, CSR 14059
- Audrey Michelle Lock Blumber, Los Angeles, CA, CSR 14057
- Bobbie Nichole Lota, Pomona, CA, CSR 14058
- Sarah Maksim, Santa Clara, CA, CSR 14053
- Dana Mann-Chipkin, Yuma, AZ, CSR 14056
- Laura Patricia Meyncke, Temecula, CA, CSR 14063
- Stacy Molina, Arcadia, CA, CSR 14064
- Rosselly Negrete, El Monte, CA, CSR 14062
- Paul Bradley Pay, Long Beach, CA, CSR 14044
- Kasidy Pighini, Corona, CA, CSR 14046
- Angela Michelle Rodriguez, Fresno, CA, CSR 14060
- Priscilla R. Steele, Sacramento, CA, CSR 14052
- Denise Angela Talancon, La Habra, CA, CSR 14047
- Joanne Chi-An Yen, South Pasadena, CA, CSR 14055

**Student Spotlight**

Kristen McElderry attained a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies from Cal State Long Beach. Unsure where to go after graduation, she considered her options and interests. “I have always been drawn to the justice system, but never had the desire to become a lawyer or a police officer,” Kristen stated. “Investigation Discovery is my favorite television channel, and I love listening to crime stories.” She then decided to go to court reporting school and enrolled at Cypress College in Southern California.

At Cypress, Kristen enjoys speed-building classes, but admits to having off days. She does not let that stop her from showing up each day to improve her writing. “Schooling comes with many ups and downs, but every day I feel accomplished and more motivated than the last,” she added. The speed-building classes allow her to get extra practice time on her machine. She also enjoys learning new briefs and phrases to incorporate into her writing.

Kristen indicated that a support system in court reporting school is crucial, whether it be family, friends, or a classmate. She finds that her classmates are the easiest to vent to because they understand the program. However, she does enjoy teaching people how steno works and explaining the program to them.

She is currently writing at the 160 level and has an impressive goal of finishing the program in less than two years. “I work as a restaurant server, which is not terrible, but it is definitely a huge motivating factor to graduate,” she said. After graduation, she is eager to work for a deposition agency to gain experience. She would love to eventually work in court.

To relieve stress, Kristen enjoys jogging. She also loves to spend time with family, especially her two nieces.
What is the responsibility of the court reporter to take down an audio recording that is played during a proceeding?

CA Rules of Court section 2.1040 governs electronic recordings presented or offered into evidence:

**RULE 2.1040 – Electronic recordings presented or offered into evidence**

(a) **Electronic recordings of deposition or other prior testimony**

(1) Before a party may present or offer into evidence an electronic sound or sound-and-video recording of deposition or other prior testimony, the party must lodge a transcript of the deposition or prior testimony with the court. At the time the recording is played, the party must identify on the record the page and line numbers where the testimony presented or offered appears in the transcript.

(2) Except as provided in (3), at the time the presentation of evidence closes or within five days after the recording in (1) is presented or offered into evidence, whichever is later, the party presenting or offering the recording into evidence must serve and file a copy of the transcript cover showing the witness name and a copy of the pages of the transcript where the testimony presented or offered appears. The transcript pages must be marked to identify the testimony that was presented or offered into evidence.

(3) If the court reporter takes down the content of all portions of the recording in (1) that were presented or offered into evidence, the party offering or presenting the recording is not required to provide a transcript of that recording under (2).

(b) **Other electronic recordings**

(1) Except as provided in (2) and (3), before a party may present or offer into evidence any electronic sound or sound-and-video recording not covered under (a), the party must provide to the court and to opposing parties a transcript of the electronic recording and provide opposing parties with a duplicate of the electronic recording, as defined in Evidence Code section 260. The transcript may be prepared by the party presenting or offering the recording into evidence; a certified transcript is not required.

(2) For good cause, the trial judge may permit the party to provide the transcript or the duplicate recording at the time the presentation of evidence closes or within five days after the recording is presented or offered into evidence, whichever is later.

(3) No transcript is required to be provided under (1):

   (A) In proceedings that are uncontested or in which the responding party does not appear, unless otherwise ordered by the trial judge;

   (B) If the parties stipulate in writing or on the record that the sound portion of a sound-and-video recording does not contain any words that are relevant to the issues in the case; or

   (C) If, for good cause, the trial judge orders that a transcript is not required.

(c) **Clerk’s duties**

An electronic recording provided to the court under this rule must be marked for identification. A transcript provided under (a)(2) or (b)(1) must be filed by the clerk.

(d) **Reporting by court reporter**

Unless otherwise ordered by the trial judge, the court reporter need not take down the content of an electronic recording that is presented or offered into evidence.

As stated above, CA Rules of Court 2.1040(d) does not require that a court reporter take down the content of
an electronic recording that is presented or offered into evidence unless ordered to do so by a trial judge. It also is noteworthy that CA Rule of Court 2.1040 is silent as to any requirement for a court reporter to transcribe electronic recordings offered into evidence during depositions, and there are no other code provisions specifically requiring such transcription.

Q My client has lost the original of a deposition transcript and is asking me to produce another original. Is there any problem with that?

A Duplicate originals should be produced only in very rare instances where there is a good reason to believe the original is lost or irretrievably damaged. This is to avoid having two originals, which may create confusion in the legal system. If a reporter decides to produce another original, it should be clearly marked as a DUPLICATE original.

Q I have been informed that the CRB recommends no reporter certification page be attached to electronic transcripts because they are considered rough drafts. Can you confirm that position?

A Electronic transcripts are not necessarily rough drafts. The Board has published a best practice pointer with regard to rough drafts which can be found on our Web site at http://www.courtreportersboard.ca.gov/formspubs/best_rtdtranscripts.pdf.

California Code of Civil Procedure section 2025.540 (b) states:

“When prepared as a rough draft transcript, the transcript of the deposition may not be certified and may not be used, cited, or transcribed as the certified transcript of the deposition proceedings. The rough draft transcript may not be cited or used in any way or at any time to rebut or contradict the certified transcript of deposition proceedings as provided by the deposition officer.”

A certification page is only used on a final transcript. To include it with a rough draft would create confusion on the part of the consumer and cause him/her to rely upon the rough draft of the transcript as if it were in its final form.

The final certified version of a transcript can also be in an electronic format. The final transcript, whether in hard copy or soft copy (electronic) should contain a certification page.

Q An attorney has requested webstreaming services for an upcoming deposition to a person at a remote location but does not want me to list that person on the appearance page. Is it okay to leave it out?

A Webstreaming is a form of realtime feed that is available to people in remote locations; so the same procedures would apply, including listing the person accessing the deposition transcript via a realtime feed. While an appearance page is not mandated by law, it is industry standard to include one, noting all participants, including those appearing remotely such as via telephone.

Also, in terms of notification for webstreaming service, California code of Civil Procedure 2025.320(b) requires that all services and products offered by the deposition officer to one party also be made available to all of the other parties. California Code of Civil Procedure 2025.320(b) states:

"Services and products offered or provided by the deposition officer or the entity providing the services of the deposition officer to any party or to any party's attorney or third party who is financing all or part of the action shall be offered to all parties or their attorneys attending the deposition. No service or product may be offered or provided by the deposition officer or by the entity providing the services of the deposition officer to any party or any party's attorney or third party who is financing all or part of the action unless the service or product is offered or provided to all parties or their attorneys attending the deposition. All services and products offered or provided shall be made available at the same time to all parties or their attorneys."

Therefore, once a request for webstreaming is received, you must notify opposing counsel to let them know of the request and offer the service.
I am preparing a criminal transcript on a case that was returned from the Court of Appeals for a hearing as to whether there was juror misconduct. The juror in question testified as a witness in the same case, so do I still need to redact his name?

California Rule of Court 8.871 (b)(1) states:

The name of each trial juror or alternate sworn to hear the case must be replaced with an identifying number wherever it appears in any document.

As the juror in question was testifying in the same case he was sworn to hear, the above requirement would apply.

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Proposed Change to the Scope of Practice Regulation

The final regulatory package for the amendment to the Scope of Practice regulation has been submitted to the Department of Consumer Affairs for review before it begins the last leg of its journey through the Office of Administrative Law (OAL). The OAL has 45 days to perform its review and notify the Board of its decision.

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CSR Spotlight

Dan Feldhaus

Whichever activities Dan Feldhaus pursues, he is sure to be in the fast lane. His enthusiasm for speed developed as a preteen when he raced motorcycles with his brother. In fact, his passion for motorcycle racing led him to place in the dirt track amateur nationals, as season points champion in ice racing, and as a professional in short track.

Growing up on his family’s farm in South Dakota, Dan thought he would follow in his father’s footsteps. “My father was one of the hardest-working farmers in South Dakota,” Dan said. “My brothers and I had many chores related to the various crops and animals we raised, including feeding livestock, and plowing, tilling and harvesting the fields. I felt satisfied after a hard day’s work of physical labor and enjoyed the quiet moments of reflection in the wide-open spaces.”

Dan’s high school typing teacher changed his career outlook during his senior year after commenting on his dexterity and speed. He recommended Dan consider court reporting as a profession to utilize his special skills. His mother, who was an English teacher, had given him an appreciation for the power of the written word.

After high school, Dan enrolled at Stenotype Institute of South Dakota where he was met by dedicated educators. “Looking back at my 18-year-old self, I know now that I did not fully realize how lucky I was to be in such a supportive environment,” Dan expressed. “That program produced many wonderful court reporters, and I am thankful for such a solid foundation.”

He began his career in 1980, a time when transcripts were prepared on a typewriter, using carbon paper for copies. One of his early jobs involved a public school board hearing in Nevada where one of the board members began quickly reading a long document into the record. The member noticed Dan struggling to write as fast as he could to keep up and began...
reading faster apparently as a form of amusement. Dan related that if he had to report many more jobs of that kind, it would have sent him running from the court reporting industry.

That experience helped prompt Dan to figure out better ways to write shorthand. He has a passion for cleaner and easier writing, which has helped him place in the state and national speed and realtime contests over the years. Fewer strokes equal less stress on the hands, contributing to the longevity of his career.

“Reporting is a constant learning endeavor. I’m constantly tweaking my writing style, my reporting process, my vocabulary, etc. Talking shop with both new and veteran reporters is a valuable source of information for every reporter. No matter how long you have been a reporter, there’s always room for improvement.”

With the advent of the computer, reporting went from slightly mundane to as exciting as playing a video game, editing on the fly. The other great advances in technology saved him countless hours poring over medical and legal reference books. He is also thankful for cell phones – knowing that a deposition has been canceled before driving hours to the location has been a wonderful blessing.

With a career spanning 35 years as an official and freelance reporter, he has enjoyed many challenging jobs, such as live captioning the State of the State speech of Governor Davis without an advance copy of the speech. He has also had the pleasure and privilege of working with some of the best attorneys in the legal field. He has also had the pleasure and privilege working with various local, state, and national commissions.

“Being a reporter has given me a view of the world that I would have otherwise never experienced. I’ve sat across and reported the words of folks from all walks of life, different cultures. I have reported the words of the governor, judge, sheriff, chief of police, and the words of the prisoner. I have reported the words of a young child and the words of a nonagenarian. I have reported the words of the CEO and the words of the jobless worker; the words of the top minds making policy changes, and words of the mentally disabled trying to just manage daily activities of living. I have come to truly appreciate this extraordinary and unique experience.”

He noted, “From a business point of view, reporting seems to have become more of a big-business venture. Some large firms are owned by venture capitalists who do not know much about reporting and are mainly concerned with the bottom line. The responsibilities of being the official reporter or deposition reporter are very solemn and serious as they create the official verbatim record. Licensure ensures the reporters have mastered the knowledge and possess the skills and ability to make an accurate official legal record in every imaginable subject area.”

He compared participating in a deposition to that of playing in an orchestra, with each party doing their part – the witness, the attorneys, and the reporter – to create the flow of the proceeding. He says he experiences an incredible feeling when his skill, knowledge and experience are combined to work in unison.

Having been first chair trumpet in high school band, it’s not surprising he made such a correlation. He credits the trumpet days of his youth for his strong lungs for running and cycling long-distance events he pursues in his free time, completing several half and a couple full marathons.

Clearly Dan has a need for speed, and that, coupled with a lifetime habit of hard work, has made him a successful world-class reporter.
A Peek at Cloud Storage

If even the mention of the cloud makes you look up at the sky and wonder what people are talking about, here is a quick overview.

To keep it simple, think of the cloud as a virtual hard drive in the sky. With the importance of each and every transcript, can a court reporter ever have too many backups? As Jeff Bertolucci in Kiplinger’s Personal Finance says, “Redundancy is the best way to protect yourself from the Four Horsemen of the Datapocalypse: fire, theft, hardware crashes and malware.” (August 2015)

It is easy to use an Internet-based provider to save, sync or back up your files. Not only does cloud storage offer you the safety of recovering your files in the event of a computer crash, but if you work from multiple devices, it offers you the convenience of being able to access your document where it’s best for you.

There are many cloud storage services available. If you are not warehousing much data, a free service such as Apple iCloud Drive, Dropbox, Google Drive and Microsoft OneDrive, may work well for you. For larger data storage, JustCloud, Backblaze, CrashPlan and Carbonite are just a few of the many providers available.

Once you choose your provider, the first step is to download the cloud provider’s app. It will integrate with your computer’s filing system. For instance, if you’re a Windows user loading Dropbox, a folder will automatically appear in File Manager. You can then move or copy files from your hard drive to your cloud account by dragging them from the PC folder to the cloud folder.

After you’re set up, you can also save files directly to your cloud account. Saving your daily files to the cloud before you leave the courthouse or deposition conference room will help protect against loss of data should your equipment get stolen or damaged.

And a quick note about syncing, for those of you working with multiple devices. When you sync a file, a copy goes to your cloud account which you can sync from any of your devices. Being able to sync the document from any device will ensure you are always working on the most current version of your document and not starting over editing an older version.

A major component to a court reporter’s job is being able to provide a transcript of the reported proceedings. Backing up data is key to that function, and using cloud storage for diligent backup is another tool in the toolbox of a successful court reporter.

Transcript Reimbursement Fund Update

The popularity of the Pro Per Program of the Transcript Reimbursement Fund (TRF) has created an almost constant backlog of requests. As such, the program exhausted the $30,000 allowance for 2015 with a majority of the approved applications having been received in 2014. Although many applications are held in suspense until funding is available, Pro Per TRF Coordinator Melissa Davis has been diligent in sending responses to each application upon receipt. “I review the application, and if anything is missing, I notify the applicant right away. If everything is there, I send them a notice that we will hold it until money is available,” she reported.

Davis joined the Board in Fall 2013 on a limited-term basis. Unfortunately, her position was not extended, and she will be leaving the Board at the end of October 2015. Davis expressed, “I’m saddened to leave the Board, the work and people that I have grown to love.”

Consequently, the Pro Per Program will be reabsorbed by existing Board staff. Every effort will be made to maintain the high level of service provided by Davis. Executive Officer Yvonne Fenner stated, “Melissa has provided an invaluable level of service to the public through her work with the TRF. She will truly be missed.”
The following respondents' Citation and Fines that reflect “Satisfied” have been satisfactorily resolved. Payment of a fine is not an admission to the violation.

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<td>13991</td>
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<td>Business &amp; Professions Code Section 8025 (d): Unprofessional conduct; Section 8025 (f): Loss or destruction of stenographic notes. (failed to retain stenographic notes and unable to produce transcript)</td>
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<td>Business &amp; Professions Code Section 8025 (a): Conviction of a felony or of a misdemeanor substantially related to the functions and duties of a court reporter.</td>
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<td>Martin, Karla – Contra Costa County</td>
<td>12025</td>
<td>Accusation</td>
<td>06/17/2015</td>
<td>Business &amp; Professions Code Section 8025 (a) and 490: Conviction of a crime; Section 8024 (c) and 8025 (b): Failure to notify Board of conviction.</td>
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<td>Waack, Jessica – San Francisco County</td>
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<td>Business &amp; Professions Code Section 8025 (a) and 490: Conviction of a crime; Section 8024 (c) and 8025 (b): Failure to notify Board of conviction.</td>
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<td>Moen, Darla</td>
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<td>Statement of Issues</td>
<td>06/12/2015</td>
<td>Business &amp; Professions Code Section 8025 (a) and 480 (a)(1), and (a)(2): Conviction of a crime.</td>
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<td>Andrade, Monica – San Diego County</td>
<td>12836</td>
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<td>06/09/2015</td>
<td>Business &amp; Professions Code Section 8025 (a) and 490: Conviction of a crime.</td>
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<td>Hughes, Scott – Alameda County</td>
<td>12365</td>
<td>Accusation</td>
<td>07/29/2014</td>
<td>Business &amp; Professions Code Section 8025 (d) and CA Code of Regulations, Title 16, Section 2475: Unprofessional conduct; Section 8025 (e) and CA Code of Regulations, Title 16, Section 2475: Repeated unexcused failure to transcribe notes; Section 8025 (h): Failure to pay civil penalties.</td>
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