

# INTERFAITH COALITION FOR JUSTICE IN OUR JAILS (ICJJ) NEWSLETTER

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a committee of [Faith in Action East Bay](#)

Visit our website at

[www.icjjalamedacounty.org](http://www.icjjalamedacounty.org)

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## Member Congregations

- Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley ~
- First Church Berkeley, UCC ~
- First Unitarian Church, Oakland ~ Interfaith Council of Alameda County ~ Kehilla Community Synagogue, Piedmont ~
- Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, Oakland ~
- Lighthouse Mosque, Oakland ~ Montclair Presbyterian Church, Oakland ~ Plymouth United Church of Christ, Oakland ~
- St. Columba Catholic Church, Oakland ~
- Skyline Community Church, United Church of Christ, Oakland ~ Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward

## Who We Are:

### Mission Statement

The ICJJ seeks to reduce incarceration as a response to social problems in Alameda County, California, and to decrease harmful conditions in the jail. We advocate to decrease the number of those imprisoned and close the revolving door to jail -- especially for those with mental health or housing needs. The jail must be safe, humane, and supportive of successful reentry into our communities.

## Victory!

**“The controversial expansion of a mental health building at Santa Rita Jail has been halted indefinitely.” Lisa Fernandez – KTVU Dec. 18, 2023**

by Micky Duxbury

After several years of committed community organizing, the State Board of Public works on December 8th declined to consider approval of a freestanding mental health office space and treatment facility at Alameda County’s Santa Rita Jail.

The campaign against a new facility at the jail began in 2015 when the Alameda County Board of Supervisors first approved an expansion of the jail for mental health treatment. The county’s contribution would have been \$5 million, but by 2023 when Alameda County and the Sheriff’s Office reinvigorated this request, it had grown to \$26.6 million from county funds towards an \$81 million stand-alone facility at the jail.

We support adequate treatment rooms at the jail, but we did not support an \$81 million investment in the County Jail at a time that there is woefully inadequate treatment for the seriously mentally ill



in the community. Furthermore, the county’s dismal track record at hiring treatment staff willing to work in the jail suggested the building would stand mostly empty, a monument to poor investment.

ICJJ joined with Care First Community Coalition, Restore Oakland, and our allies in Families Advocating for the Seriously Mentally Ill (FASMI) to register our continued opposition to Alameda County Jail’s being the largest mental health facility in the county.

Myrna Schwartz of ICJJ submitted a packet to the State Board of Public Works demonstrating broad community opposition. It included petitions from clergy and mental healthcare workers, opposition letters from Alameda County's own Mental Health Advisory Board and Care First Jails Last Task Force, and media coverage of public protests. In the face of this the State Board, usually a final rubber stamp for building projects, instead withdrew the item from its agenda.

Determined and persistent advocacy combined with opposition to the project from State Senator Nancy Skinner contributed to this significant victory. Many of

us were surprised and even shocked at how quickly the house of cards finally fell apart. The message is that we can never underestimate the power of committed individuals and groups to make a difference when we collaborate and stay determined and focused on our vision for a more just criminal legal system.

**See links below for excellent coverage by KTVU:**

<https://www.ktvu.com/news/community-groups-oppose-santa-rita-jail-mental-health-expansion>

<https://www.ktvu.com/news/mental-health-expansion-of-santa-rita-jail-on-indefinite-pause>

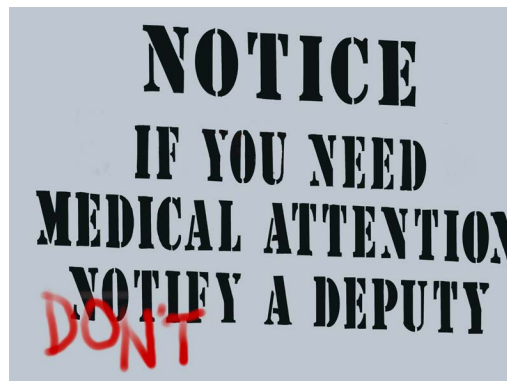
## ICJJ Objects to *Glowing Jail Inspection Report* and Gets Action

**by Bob Britton**

ICJJ Chair Richard Speiglmán could not let it stand when Alameda County's Health Officer and the Director of Environmental Health issued the County's annual Title 15 inspection audit of Santa Rita Jail for 2023. As in years past, the report to the Board of Supervisors' Public Protection Committee was mostly a glowing review of conditions at the jail. Unable to abide that in light of the dozens of avoidable in-custody deaths occurring in recent years, and the recent expose by KTVU of horrible neglect by the custodial and medical staff of prisoner Maurice Monk that coincided with his preventable death in 2021, Speiglmán called out the "whitewashing" of the jail conditions. "If what happened to Mr. Monk isn't against the rules, of what use is the audit?" he asked.

In an email communication to Supervisor Elisa Márquez, Chair of the Board of Supervisors' Public Protection Committee one day before the report's November 16, 2023, presentation, Speiglmán listed several concerns:

- Procedures at Santa Rita in operation two years previous to report submission failed tragically to meet California Title 15 Minimum Standards For Local Detention Facilities.
- The county's jail audit methodology is not adequate to the challenge of Santa Rita Jail.
- A revised report or one accompanied by an appropriate and acceptable addendum is required.



Speiglmán suggested, among other things, that the county's public health audit be updated to outline in the strongest language additional recommendations for the Jail, Alameda County Behavioral Health, and jail health contractor Wellpath to follow to prevent future jail deaths.

In an extraordinary development, County Health Officer Dr. Nicholas Moss engaged with the criticism. Contrary to Board practice, Dr. Moss responded immediately to the comments Speiglmán raised by letter and others made during Public Comment. He followed up five weeks later with a memo to the entire Board of Supervisors and County Administrator Susan Muranishi.

Significantly, Dr. Moss wrote, "Deaths in custody must be prevented. When they occur, every effort should be made to identify and correct practices that may have contributed." As California Code of Regulations Title 15 inspector and speaking for the larger Health Care Services Agency (HCSA), Dr. Moss committed to verifying whether changes to policies and practices were documented following death reviews.

ICJJ looks forward to working with Dr. Moss and his HCSA colleagues to see that procedures are in place to promote jail healthcare, prevent in-custody deaths, and respond appropriately as required.

ICJJ is aware of 72 deaths that took place in Alameda County's jails since 2014 - or that immediately

## Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities are displayed in CA Code of Regulations - Title 15

§ 1046. Death in Custody.

...

Deaths shall be reviewed to determine the appropriateness of clinical care; whether changes to policies, procedures, or practices are warranted; and to identify issues that require further study.

...

§ 1202. Health Service Audits

The health authority shall develop and implement a written plan for annual statistical summaries of health care and pharmaceutical services that are provided. The responsible physician shall also establish a mechanism to assure that the quality and adequacy of these services are assessed annually. The plan shall include a means for the correction of identified deficiencies of the health care and pharmaceutical services delivered.

...

§ 1208. Access to Treatment

The health authority, in cooperation with the facility administrator, shall develop a written plan for identifying and referring any incarcerated person who appears to be in need of medical, mental health, dental, or developmental disability treatment at any time during their incarceration subsequent to the receiving screening.

followed release from jail and appear connected to time in custody. While deaths represent only the tip of the iceberg of inadequate jail care, certainly deaths are a major concern. The audit report was presented two weeks following the startling revelation that in 2021 county jail prisoner Maurice Monk died in a Santa Rita Jail cell filled with "stacks of uneaten food trays and pills lay scattered on the floor" ([read full story at KTVU](#)). Clearly neither sheriff's deputies nor jail health nurses tended to Mr. Monk's needs in his final days.

ICJJ was pleased to hear County Health Officer Moss comment, following his November report

presentation, "Deaths in custody are unacceptable, and we should be striving to eliminate them and do all that we can to reach that goal. . . . we do take [deaths] seriously and are considering . . . what other steps we can take with regard to the report on the inspection but also more broadly how we can continue to support our county partners in working to improve outcomes at the facility. And that is something that we're doing not necessarily specific to deaths but for healthcare more broadly and outside of the scope of Title 15 inspections." In his December 26, 2023, memo Dr. Moss wrote, "I and the Health Care Services Agency are taking steps to support better health outcomes at Santa Rita Jail."

## Join a Conversation on Public Safety Thursday, February 15



Everyone deserves to feel and be safe in their community. **What is the role of the District Attorney in public safety, and which approaches by district attorneys work best for our communities?**

Join us in a conversation with Chesa Boudin, Executive Director, UC Berkeley Criminal Law & Justice Center and former San Francisco District Attorney. When you register, you can also propose questions to ask our speaker.

**6:30-8 p.m. Thursday, February 15**

**Attend virtually (link to be provided after registration) OR  
In person: Montclair Presbyterian Church,  
5701 Thornhill Drive, Oakland**

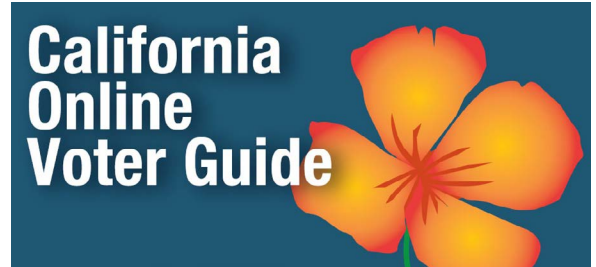
**Register and submit your questions here:**  
[bit.ly/boudin-event-registration](https://bit.ly/boudin-event-registration)

Cosponsors include the Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails, Congregation Beth El, Kehilla Community Synagogue, Lakeshore Ave Baptist Church, Montclair Presbyterian Church, Plymouth UCC-The Jazz & Justice Church, Skyline Community Church, St. Columba Catholic Church, the Temple Sinai Criminal Justice Workgroup, NorCal Bend the Arc Jewish Action, and Faith in Action East Bay.

## Upcoming Elections: March 5, 2024

In March (ballots are mailed in early February) Alameda County Board of Supervisor positions are up for vote. Districts 4 and 5 are contested this year. ICJJ suggests that in public forums or other settings voters may want to pose questions to the candidates. A project of a 501 (c)(3) organization, ICJJ does not endorse candidates. District Map:

<https://www.acgov.org/board/documents/districtmap.pdf>



<https://voterguide.sos.ca.gov>

### Sample questions for candidates:

1. Approximately 30% of the population in Alameda County Jail has mental illness. A recent campaign stopped the building of a stand-alone mental health facility at the jail and we want the money to be used to provide treatment and supportive, affordable housing in the community instead.
  - ~ Do you believe that seriously mentally ill people should be incarcerated?
  - ~ What role would you play in supporting the development of mental health treatment facilities in the community vs. the jail?
2. What would you do to ensure that a full continuum of mental health treatment - from crisis intervention to permanent supportive housing - is a priority for Alameda County?
3. What do you see as the roles of the Sheriff and the Board of Supervisors in improving conditions of confinement in the jail?
4. The Reimagining Adult Justice Initiative that retired Chief Probation Officer Wendy Still led noted the high percentage of people incarcerated at SRJ for 48 hours or less (58% in 2021).
  - ~ Given the life disruptions this causes and the high costs of jail staffing, do you have proposals to decrease the number of low-level offenders going to jail for brief periods of time?