



16th Judicial Circuit, Jackson County, Missouri

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News Release

Health and safety high priority as jury trials resume

As jury trials start again in Jackson County, the Court has instituted a multitude of precautions to protect the health of jurors, litigants, attorneys and Court staff.

“As the Court resumes jury trials, we are balancing our constitutional obligations with the high priority of maintaining health and safety,” said Presiding Judge David M. Byrn.

Prospective jurors will find the process starts with more communication between them and Jury Room staff to make sure the time is right for them to fulfill their civic responsibility of serving as a juror. The Court is trying to insure that only those people report to the courthouse who are qualified, able and willing to serve at this time.

Prospective jurors do not need to report to the courthouse if they are seeking a temporary postponement. Postponements are being considered and granted over the phone or as jurors fill out their prequalification form on the computer.

Of course, anyone who is ill, has recently had COVID, are taking care of someone who has COVID, or who are in self-quarantine should not report for jury service, but call instead and speak with Jury Room staff in Independence at 881-1619 or in Kansas City at 881-3602.

Once jurors arrive at the courthouse, they will find their temperature will be taken, they will be sitting and standing six feet apart, and they are required to wear a mask. Disposable gloves and hand sanitizer will be available.

In the past, a single large group of prospective jurors would report at one time. That is not possible with social distancing requirements. The Court will bring in smaller groups of around 50 people three times a day. Each group will be in the courthouse for about three hours. After final qualification, the reporting prospective jurors will be further divided into smaller groups and seated in different courtrooms for voir dire where they will continue to be socially distanced. The jury assembly room, courtrooms and restrooms will be sanitized throughout the day, including before the next group arrives to use that particular space.

If jurors are selected to serve on a trial, they will not be seated together in the jury box. Jurors will be spread out in specific locations throughout the courtroom, again maintaining social distance.

Thus far, the Court has been pleased with the response to its latest juror summons with many people stating they are able to serve at this time.

“Jury service may very well be the second highest form of public service that any American can perform – second only to service in the Armed Forces,” Byrn said. However, he also said that “we will work with you on the timing of your service to the degree allowed.”

Jury trials are resuming at the Eastern Jackson County Courthouse in Independence on September 21, 2020, and at the Kansas City Courthouse downtown on October 5, 2020.

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