



16th Judicial Circuit
Jackson County, Missouri

For Immediate Release:
November 18, 2020

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News Release

Circuit Court cancels jury trials through December 2020

In an Administrative Order issued today, the 16th Judicial Circuit Court is cancelling jury trials through December 2020 due to a recent significant rise in COVID-19 cases in the region.

“Every day is a new day in the fight against this pandemic,” said Presiding Judge David Byrn. “Unfortunately, the recent significant spike in cases, hospitalizations, deaths and increasing concern about community spread has led the Court to determine that jury trials should be cancelled through the end of the year.”

This cancellation comes after several jury trials were recently held. After those trials, the Court received overwhelmingly positive responses from people who were summoned and served as jurors. The majority of responding jurors said they felt safe when called to serve.

“The Court is pleased that our efforts to maintain the health and safety of citizens called to serve as jurors were successful and jurors felt safe while fulfilling their civic responsibility. However, changing circumstances have led to the decision to temporarily postpone additional jury trials,” Byrn said.

Prior to the resumption of jury trials in September, the Jackson County Circuit Court put increased health and safety measures in place as well as modified some of its protocols so those reporting to the courthouse were qualified, able and willing to serve as jurors. Those efforts were well received.

The Court surveyed jurors who were summoned and served at the Eastern Jackson County Courthouse in Independence.

64% of responding jurors said they were either *not concerned* or *somewhat concerned* about serving on a jury due to COVID. 18% reported being *fairly concerned* and 18 % reported being *very concerned*.

92% said information from the Court helped address their concerns before they reported for jury duty.

93% of responding jurors later reported feeling *very safe* or *fairly safe* while at the courthouse.

(more)

The health and safety procedures and protocols implemented by the Court included:

- Bringing in fewer jurors at a time.
- Shortening the time jurors were in the courthouse.
- Prequalifying the jurors so that only those who were able to serve reported.
- Jurors seeking a temporary postponement of their service were granted one, if they qualified, without coming to the courthouse.
- Temperature checks.
- Masks and social distancing requirements.
- Jury room and courtrooms sanitized multiple times a day.
- Availability of hand sanitizer, sanitizing wipes, masks and gloves.

“Our jury staff worked hard to provide as safe an environment as we possibly could to citizens who were called to serve,” said Byrn. “I was especially pleased to learn one of the jurors stated it was the best job of any that he had seen at a public facility.”

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