



Supreme Court of Appeals State of West Virginia

News

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Supreme Court Releases New Jury Orientation Video, Handbook, Proclaims November Juror Appreciation Month

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CHARLESTON, W.Va. – The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia is releasing a new jury orientation video and updated juror handbook in conjunction with a proclamation making November “Juror Appreciation Month” in West Virginia.

The announcement will be made at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, November 17, in the Supreme Court Courtroom on the third floor of the East Wing of the West Virginia Capitol in Charleston.

“Jury service is the cornerstone of the American justice system. The courts of West Virginia, and indeed our nation, could not function without citizen juror participation,” said Chief Justice Evan Jenkins. “In 2020, 36,104 people, about 2 percent of West Virginia’s population, filled out juror qualification questionnaires. Jurors step away from their jobs and personal lives and devote their time and attention to helping our court system proceed the way the Constitution intended. Jury service is a right and a privilege. Thank you to all West Virginians who have fulfilled this duty.”

During Juror Appreciation Month and every day, the West Virginia court system extends its sincere gratitude to those citizens who served on a jury and ensured that right to trial by a jury is guaranteed for everyone in our communities.

“We also thank the many companies, government agencies, school districts, and small businesses that encourage and support their employees when they are called to jury service,” Chief Justice Jenkins said.

Justice Beth Walker said, “On behalf of all West Virginians, we celebrate the public service of jurors. Sometimes jury service is inconvenient and even challenging, but folks who serve on juries perform a crucial role in our state courts.”

Justice Tim Armstead said, “Our Constitution guarantees the parties in criminal and civil courts have their cases decided by their fellow citizens from the communities in which they live. This is an important right, and an important civic duty on the part of jurors. Jurors make decisions that have serious consequences for those involved. We thank all jurors for fulfilling this vital public service.”

“In my 23 years as a trial judge, I came to know the difficulties that jury service imposed upon the citizens of the state of West Virginia,” said Justice John Hutchison. “The judicial branch is the only branch of state government that *requires* the participation of the citizens of this state to meet the court’s obligations under our Constitution. I think it is only fitting that all the jurors who have served in the past and those who will serve in the future be recognized for their sacrifice and dedication to the state of West Virginia.”

Justice William R. Wooton said, “Jurors – the triers of fact – form the bedrock of the most basic constitutional right. The entire judicial system would fail but for the service of our state’s citizens. As John Adams once said, ‘Representative government and trial by jury are the heart and lungs of liberty.’ We applaud all jurors for fulfilling this most important civic duty.”

The 10-minute jury orientation video was filmed in July in the Kanawha County Judicial Building. The video was developed under grant number SJI-20-T-006 from the State Justice Institute and features judicial system employees and community volunteers. The points of view expressed are those of the scriptwriters and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the State Justice Institute.

Supreme Court Administrative Office staff updated the existing handbook.

Judges, magistrates, and clerks may choose to use the video and handbook in conjunction with their own jury orientation programs.

Both the video and handbook will be posted Wednesday on the Jury Information section of the West Virginia Judiciary website: <http://www.courtswv.gov/public-resources/jury-information.html>.

The proclamation reads:

To recognize the importance of jury service and to declare the month of November 2021 as “Juror Appreciation Month” in the Judicial Branch of the State of West Virginia.

WHEREAS, trial by jury is a foundation of American democracy, as indicated by the Sixth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States of America and Article 3 of the West Virginia Constitution;

WHEREAS, the effectiveness of our justice system is measured by the integrity and dedication of jurors in our courts;

WHEREAS, the Judicial Branch of the State of West Virginia is working to educate the public about jury service and to praise the many citizens who have served as jurors;

WHEREAS, the Judicial Branch of the State of West Virginia encourages all residents of West Virginia to applaud the efforts of the jurors who support the justice system and fulfill this important civic responsibility;

WHEREAS, the Judicial Branch of the State of West Virginia encourages all West Virginians to support the court system and, when called upon, to fulfill the important civic responsibility and privilege of jury service; and

BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF WEST VIRGINIA, that the Judicial Branch of the State of West Virginia does hereby proclaim the month of November 2021 as “Juror Appreciation Month.”

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