

*Court of Common Pleas
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James F. Stevenson - Judge

To Prospective Juror:

You have been summoned as a prospective juror for trials scheduled for the next court term. I suspect that your reaction upon receiving the summons may have been one of annoyance or dismay. That is certainly understandable. Most of us have busy schedules, employment, or other matters that we do not want to have disrupted by having to serve on a jury.

However, jury service is a critical part of our responsibility as citizens of this community. The guarantee of trial by jury is the reason you have been called to serve as a juror. It is both an honor and a duty to participate in our judicial process. As a juror, you will have the opportunity to observe, participate in, and increase your knowledge about the operation of our court system and the judicial branch of government.

The Constitutions of the United States and the State of Ohio guarantee individuals who have cases in court the right to have that case decided by a jury. For the judicial system to function properly citizens must perform that very important duty. I hope you understand if citizens did not perform that duty, then persons who have committed crimes could not be convicted, persons improperly charged could not be acquitted, and persons who have civil grievances could not have them resolved.

Because jury service is so important, the Court may excuse citizens from serving for only very limited reasons. Employment is almost never an excuse. The law protects employees because they miss work for jury duty. No employer shall discharge, threaten to discharge, or take any disciplinary action that could lead to the discharge of any permanent employee who is summoned to serve as a juror. No employer shall require or request an employee to use annual, vacation, or sick leave for time spent responding to a summons for jury duty, time spent participating in the jury selection process, or for time spent actually serving on a jury.

Unlike some states, Ohio does not require employers to pay employees while on jury duty. The Court recognizes that some income may be lost because of jury service. That is regrettable. However, that alone is not sufficient to excuse someone from jury service. Nor is it an excuse that your employer complains they can't do without you. Consider this—if you are able to take time off for vacation or when sick then the Court cannot excuse you from jury service because of employment.

Similarly, the fact you have children does not excuse jury service. If you can reasonably arrange for childcare, then you must do so. You may not bring children with you to court. Jury service is a very serious matter and children could be very disruptive to the whole process.

Unless you are a member of certain recognized amish sects, the fact you have concerns about “judging” someone will not excuse you. Remember, you are not judging the person, but you are deciding the facts of the case and then applying the law as given you by the Court. We all make judgments in our every day lives; for example, determining whether a child has done something wrong and must be punished.

You may be summoned to serve within the next four months for a case. Your selection to a particular case is by random draw. A summons is a Court Order to appear. A failure to appear when summoned may result in a finding of contempt with possible fines or jail sentences. Enclosed with this letter are further instructions if you are notified to appear on a particular date and time.

The Court will try to make your jury service as convenient as we can while you are at court. Most jury trials only last a day or two although occasionally longer trials do happen.

I hope that this letter helps explain the importance of jury service. Remember, you or a loved one may some day be involved in a case that you want decided by a jury. Just as you would want citizens to perform that important duty for you, you should be prepared to perform that duty for others.

SHELBY COUNTY COMMON PLEAS COURT

Judge James F. Stevenson

INSTRUCTIONS TO PROSPECTIVE JURORS

If you believe you are exempt from jury duty under Section 2313.16 of the Ohio Revised Code, please complete an "Application for Excuse for a Juror." The application and Ohio Revised Code Section 2313.16 can be found on our website at <http://co.shelby.oh.us/CommonPleasCourt> or by contacting the Clerk of Court's office. The application must be submitted at the Clerk of Court's office. You will receive a response indicating whether you have or have not been excused. **Please note that there are very few reasons which allow the prospective juror to be excused. Work related excuses are not one of the statutory exemptions, and will not suffice.**

Enclosed with this letter is a summons. You should keep the summons and present it to the clerk or the bailiff on the date you are requested to appear in Court. If your summons has no specific date set for you to appear, the Clerk of Courts will notify you of the exact date to appear.

Should your employer require proof of jury service, you may obtain a certificate from the Clerk of Courts upon request when you report for jury duty. Jurors are compensated at the rate of \$15 per day served. If you appear but are excused, you will be compensated at the rate of \$10. This will be paid by check and mailed to you by the Clerk of Courts.

If you are summoned to serve as a juror, please park in the downtown area. You will receive a juror parking pass which should be placed on the dashboard of your vehicle. In the event you should receive a parking ticket, hand the ticket to the bailiff during the Court session.

Please visit our website at <http://co.shelby.oh.us/CommonPleasCourt> which may answer many of your questions. The Court staff will do all they can to make your jury service pleasant and will answer any questions you may have. However, they are not permitted to answer questions about an on-going case or any of the participants.