



July 10, 2009

July is 'Juror Appreciation' month

*Thirty-Seventh Judicial Circuit of Michigan
Reader Submitted*

July has been designated by the Michigan Supreme Court as "Juror Appreciation" month to honor and thank citizens who participate in jury duty. Calhoun County Chief Circuit Judge Allen L. Garbrecht, Chief Probate Judge Gary K. Reed and Chief District Court Judge John R. Holmes, on behalf of their respective courts, take this opportunity to thank Calhoun County citizens who annually are called upon to participate in this fundamental responsibility of citizenship.

Each year qualification questionnaires are sent to approximately 10,000 Calhoun County residents who are either holders of Michigan Driver's Licenses or Personal Identification cards. Of these, nearly 6,500 qualify for jury service. Michigan law requires qualified jurors to be citizens of the United States, 18 years of age or older and residents of the county for which selected. In addition, the person must be able to communicate in the English language, able to physically and mentally carry out the functions of a juror, not have served as a juror in a court of record during the preceding 12 months and not have been convicted of a felony. A person more than 70 years of age may claim exemption from jury service. Of the 6,500 persons who qualify each year about 3,000 are actually called to report for jury service.

Trial by jury is a central right of our democratic form of government. The jury system provides a balance between the power of the government and that of the local community. The right to trial by jury is enshrined in both the United States and the Michigan constitutions.

Jury service involves both a sacrifice of time and convenience. Calhoun County courts have attempted to minimize any inconvenience by limiting service to the shorter of 15 days or one trial. In addition, rather than reporting in person daily for service, unless selected for a trial, jurors can call in to a specified telephone number nightly to determine if they need to actually appear in person the next business day. Court staff work closely with jurors to accommodate special time needs like pre-existing medical appointments and scheduled vacations.

The Chief Judges of Calhoun County courts join the Michigan Supreme Court to acknowledge the sacrifices made by Calhoun County citizens in providing this most important of public services jury duty.
