



Editorial: Jury service is fundamental to our democracy

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Will all of you in our reading audience who have ever served on a jury please raise your hands?

Thank you. And we mean that sincerely.

This month is Juror Appreciation Month. We can't think of a better time or a better role in our democracy to celebrate.

"Jury service is the community's participation in the justice system," said Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly. "Juror Appreciation Month recognizes that jury service is truly democracy in action."

The right to a trial by jury is one of the core values of American citizenship, Kelly noted.

"In my experience, even the most reluctant jurors find the experience very rewarding. They come away with a renewed appreciation for the justice system, and for their part in bringing justice to those whose cases they hear," she said.

In a resolution designating the month of July for this observation, the state high court stated the following:

"The obligation and privilege to serve as a juror are as fundamental to our democracy as the right to vote; and,

"Our courts depend upon citizens to serve as jurors; and,

"All citizens should be encouraged to respond when summoned for jury service; and

"A continuing and imperative goal for the courts, the bar and the broader community is to ensure that jury selection and jury service are fair, effective and not unduly burdensome on anyone; and

"One of the most significant actions a court system can take is to show appreciation for the jury system and for the tens of thousands of citizens who annually give their time and talents to serve on juries."

As history has shown, the jury system is one of our democracy's greatest strengths.

It can prevent the abuse of power by the government, Legislature or business. It can guard against arbitrary or unfair actions by individual judges. It can protect the rights of citizens.

Before the Revolutionary War, the colonists knew the right to trial by jury was a safeguard against government tyranny and oppression.

It still is.

So, if summoned to serve, respond promptly and willingly. In many local courts, jury service is one day or one trial, whichever is longer. The average length of most trials here is one or two days.

Yes, it's a duty for all citizens. Yes, it can be inconvenient and time-consuming.

But it also can be a fascinating and educational experience.

Those of you who raised your hands already know that. Be proud of your service.

We're proud, and we're grateful, too.

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