

BRIEFLY SPEAKING

Michigan courts celebrate juror appreciation month

LANSING — As the nation prepares to celebrate American independence next month, the Michigan Supreme Court and courts across the state will also celebrate one of the core values of American citizenship — the right to trial by jury.

To raise awareness of the importance of jury service and to thank those who serve, the Supreme Court has designated July 2007 as “Juror Appreciation Month” in Michigan, with the theme “Democracy in Action.”

In a resolution proclaiming that July is Juror Appreciation Month, the Court said, “Michigan courts greatly appreciate the tens of thousands of citizens who annually give their time and talents to serve on juries.”

Chief Justice Clifford W. Taylor observed, “The right to trial by jury was one of the issues over which the Revolutionary War was fought. Next to voting, there is no more important duty for citizens of a democracy than to serve on a jury. That is why the Court chose July, the month in which we celebrate American independence, to also honor jurors. Jury service is a duty of citizenship, a high privilege, and an opportunity to observe and participate in democracy.”

The Court’s choice of Flag Day to make the announcement is also deliberate, Taylor said. “It seemed appropriate to choose the day when we honor the symbol of our country,” he said. “This is the occasion for honoring not only the flag, but also the freedoms and rights it stands for, including the right to trial by jury.”

A DVD about jury service, produced by Eaton County judges and court staff, will be shared with participating courts throughout Michigan. The DVD is aimed at improving the jury experience by helping the public understand the value and requirements of jury service.

For more information about Juror Appreciation Month, visit the Court’s web site at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/supremecourt/Press/Juror/index.htm>.

Another way to learn more about jury service is to visit the Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center website. Visitors can play a game to test their knowledge about what every juror should know. Sample questions include: Must a jury reach a unanimous verdict? Do all jurors have to agree on the verdict? How many persons are on a jury? Find the answers at <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/lc-gallery/jury.htm> or visit the Learning Center, located on the first floor of the Hall of Justice at 925 West Ottawa Street, Lansing, at the corner of Allegan Street and Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard. Walk-in visitors are welcome. Docent-led tours are available for groups of eight or more. For reservations, call (517) 373-7229.

Source: Michigan Supreme Court, Office of Public Information