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## Michigan Supreme Court dedicates July to jurors

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The Michigan Supreme Court has declared July to be Juror Appreciation Month in an effort to raise awareness about jury service.

"It's an occasion that's been declared by the Michigan Supreme Court to recognize people who have served on juries and to recognize the importance of jury service and its role in democracy," said Marcia McBrien, public information officer for the Michigan Supreme Court.

Forty-one courts in 28 counties will participate, including Lansing's 54-A District Court.

"It's understandable (duty) is not the way people want to spend their time," McBrien said. "On the other hand, one of the reasons the Revolutionary War was fought was for the right to trial by jury."

Sometimes, for college students in particular, jury duty can be impossible and students can get out of it, McBrien said.

Journalism junior Mike Blasky said he got out of jury duty twice.

"My first time, I was supposed to serve in early May, during exams," Blasky said. "I had to write the city clerk and have them excuse me. They did, but they told me I'd be serving in June."

To avoid that, Blasky got creative.

"I got out of that one by changing my residence," he said. "They haven't sent anything back since."

Despite those exceptions, McBrien said it is important to remember there are more personal things at stake.

"People who are contemplating jury service don't understand how important a role they'll play not only in the judicial process, but also in someone's life," she said.

Each court selects how to honor jurors, ranging anywhere from judges going into the juror assembly room during selection to speak with the potential jurors, to writing editorial columns about the importance of jury service. Some judges are standing on the courthouse steps shaking hands and thanking people for their participation on the jury, McBrien said.

The 54-A District Court is taking a two-pronged approach to honoring Michigan's jurors.

"The judges authored letters of appreciation to each citizen who reported for jury service, expressing their gratitude," said Mary Kelly, deputy court administrator for 54-A District Court.

"We had a banner made up recognizing Juror Appreciation Month that will be hanging in the lobby of Lansing City Hall," Kelly said.

An objective of Juror Appreciation Month is to illustrate the importance of jury service, even if it may be an inconvenience. Another is to encourage involvement in the process by letting potential jurors know an employer cannot legally discipline, fire or make an employee serve overtime if they answer the call for service, McBrien said.

Some students, however, aren't sure the program will make a difference to potential jurors.

"It's a waste of time," said Patrick Maine, a retailing senior. "Nobody wants to be a juror, unless you're a very good civic citizen. I don't think it's gonna help anybody at all."

One way to encourage more students to participate would be to raise the amount jurors are paid and have the state strike a deal with colleges, food management junior Sead Mazurski said.

"I know kids have jobs and lose money when they have to go to jury duty," Mazurski said. "If they can excuse you from classes and teachers would be more receptive to it, maybe (that would help too)."

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