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from the Midland Daily News

06/16/2007

## Jury surveys going out

By [Kelly Dame](#)

Service on a jury panel is what kept Jerome M.P. Kole, the county's trial court administrator, headed for a career in the law. And with the recent mailing of 7,000 jury questionnaire forms, other Midlanders have a chance to see what he found so interesting.

The questionnaires are mailed out each year by the Midland County courts according to lists, from Lansing, of who has a driver license or personal ID card. Kole said after accounting for people who have moved, are not qualified to serve for various reasons or who are deceased, the pool will boast between 5,500 to 6,000 residents.

Anyone who receives a questionnaire is required by state law to fill it out and return it within 10 days.

Simply receiving the form shouldn't be cause for dismay over canceled vacation plans, however.

"Filling out the form does not mean that you'll be on a jury," Kole said.

The jury questionnaires are shared with the county's jury board, which is made up of three people appointed by the county's board of commissioners upon recommendation of the circuit court judges. The jury board may remove names from the jury pool due to serious physical or mental health concerns, age, citizenship or felony convictions. Anyone found to be qualified could be called to serve from Oct. 1, 2007 to Sept. 30, 2008.

Each month, notices are sent to people needed to serve on panels. That means, for Kole, the inevitable calls from residents requesting their service be moved to another month or to be excused altogether.

"We try to accommodate," Kole said, adding it is possible to schedule a person's jury service for a later time in the year to avoid conflicts with work meetings or trips, vacations or even college schedules. Sometimes, college students who live in Midland but attend class elsewhere get the notices, and other times it's homemakers who need to schedule someone else to care for children or other loved ones.

Another concern Kole hears frequently is that people literally can't afford to miss work to serve.

To help in that arena, jurors are paid at a rate of \$12.50 for the first half day of service, and \$20 for each half day after that. So, if people serve one and a half days, they'll be paid \$52.50.

"It's a good base" helping take the edge off, Kole said.

"People in our community are very civic minded," Kole said, adding he believes most who will serve on a jury understand the importance of the job. And if they didn't have a clear idea before serving, an explanation by the judge overseeing the case of what the jury's role is, in conjunction with the Constitution, should drive it home, he said.

Anyone who's called to participate and does not abide will be reminded that their service is important, Kole said. If they miss a second time, a judge could issue an order for a show cause hearing.

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