

Dear Prospective Juror:

During the COVID-19 pandemic judges across the country have been asking the same question: How can we safely provide access to justice? In March, Lynnwood Municipal Court suspended many hearings, holding court only for emergent matters. Jury trials were also suspended. Over the last couple of months, we have slowly expanded our operations and in July returned to a full schedule.

Jury trials are necessary to the open administration of justice in the state of Washington. By order of the Washington State Supreme Court, all jury trials were postponed until at least July 6. The suspension of jury trials was needed to protect the health of court users and court staff, and it gave us the opportunity to redesign our jury process with the input of public health officials. It is now critical that we re-start jury trials, which are key to the fair administration of justice. As such, Lynnwood Municipal Court will be resuming jury trials in September. We hope you will be willing to answer the call to serve. Diverse juries are a critical component of justice. I want to assure you that every reasonable precaution will be taken to enhance the health and safety of all jurors, attorneys and Court staff during jury selection and the jury trial to follow.

Chief Justice Debra Stephens convened a jury trial workgroup in May consisting of lawyers, clerks, court staff and judges. The mission of the workgroup was to anticipate the problems courts may face with jury trials and identify solutions. Thus, as this Court resumes jury trials, several steps will be taken to protect you and your fellow jurors:

- Voir dire will occur in 2 small groups.
- The courtroom will only be accessible to jurors, counsel, and parties to the case.
- Masks are required to be worn in the Courthouse, with some exceptions. While jurors are encouraged to bring their own masks, the Court will provide a mask for those that do not have one.
- Courtroom seating will maintain a minimum of 6-feet social distancing.
- Hand sanitizer will be readily available and latex gloves offered to those who wish to wear them.
- Increased cleaning and sanitization will occur in the courtroom.
- Jury deliberations will occur in the courtroom and not in a separate jury deliberation room.
- No shared snacks or beverages will be available. Bottled water will be available, and jurors will be permitted to bring their own water bottles.

Jurors deemed to be in a high-risk category for the coronavirus, who are reluctant to serve for safety reasons, or are experiencing hardship brought on by the pandemic may have

their service postponed. Please follow the instructions on the Questionnaire to request a deferral.

The right to a jury trial is one of the cornerstones of our democracy, and jury trials necessarily involve sacrifice from those citizens called upon to serve. This has always been true, but it is especially true during these unique and trying times. It is my personal conviction that jury service is one of the highest forms of public service that any American can perform. The right to trial by jury is set forth in the Washington State constitution, has been enshrined within the Sixth Amendment to our U. S. Constitution since 1791, and it was one of the stated principles in the Declaration of Independence which fueled our struggle to become an independent nation. While I understand some of you may be unable to serve at this time, only those with extreme hardships or genuine concern should seek to be excused.

We understand that many of you who receive a jury summons will be unable to serve. The pandemic has caused both a health and economic crisis. Taking time off work to serve as a juror now or in the immediate future may create a financial hardship for you. This is understood. But to those of you who can serve and are looking for a way to participate in the justice system in the most impactful way, we welcome you to the Lynnwood Municipal Court. We are committed to making your experience as a juror safe and thank you in advance for your service to your community.

Very sincerely yours,

Stephen E. Moore, Presiding Judge
Lynnwood Municipal Court