

Superior Court of the State of Washington In and for the County of Whatcom

Whatcom County Superior Court

Judge Robert Olson (Dept. 1)
Judge Evan Jones (Dept. 2)
Judge Lee Grochmal (Dept. 3)
Judge David Freeman (Dept. 4)



Whatcom County Courthouse

311 Grand Avenue, Suite 301
Bellingham, Washington 98225

Dear Fellow Citizen,

Recently you have received a Summons for jury service. You may have some concerns about serving on a jury, and we write to assure you about the measures our Court and staff have taken to ensure your safety while serving this important civic duty.

As you probably know, our courts, along with the rest of our community, have faced serious challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. While we have continued to conduct hearings before our judges, we did not resume conducting jury trials until March 2021, and only after developing the knowledge and training we needed to do so safely. Along the way, we have sought and followed the advice of public health authorities to ensure the utmost safety for all court participants.

We continue to limit the number of jurors we summons in order to assure that all participants can maintain a comfortable distance from one another during service. We have assessed our courtrooms to assure adequate ventilation and space. During trials, jurors will sit in the larger gallery area, rather than the jury box, so that they have adequate room. We have prohibited shared access to reading material, food, and other items. We have also arranged for public spectators to observe from another location, to minimize interactions and maximize space. Handwashing facilities and sanitizer stations are located throughout the building, and our courtrooms are cleaned daily.

Lastly, due to the compulsory nature of jury service, and the proximity of jurors during service, we continue to require the use of masks for all jurors. Please bring a face covering with you if possible, but masks will also be available at the courthouse.

In short, we have worked hard to make our jury trials safe. Jury trials are essential to our justice system, and many defendants, witnesses, and others have been waiting for months for their constitutionally-provided day in court. We will continue to work hard to provide a safe experience for everyone involved.

Even with these safety measures in place, you may remain concerned given your individual circumstances. Therefore, you may request deferment of jury service if you are at higher risk for COVID-19 based on your age or existing health condition, or those of a household member, or have other individual medical concerns. If you wish to request deferment of your jury service to a later date, please send a written detailed request on your Juror Questionnaire to the Jury Coordinator as soon as possible.

In addition, if you are currently ill, experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of smell or taste or less common gastrointestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting or diarrhea), or have tested (or test) positive for COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone who recently tested positive for COVID-19 within 14 days of the date of the jury term stated on the Summons, please do not come to the courthouse. Instead, call the jury line at (360) 778-5435, leaving your name, phone number, juror number, and jury term, for further information or direction related to your jury service.

Thank you again for your willingness to serve your justice system and our community with your jury service during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

The Judges of the Whatcom County Superior Court



Rob Olson



Lee Grochmal



David Freeman



Evan Jones