



District Court of Minnesota

THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT

JODI L. WILLIAMSON
JUDGE OF DISTRICT COURT

DODGE COUNTY COURTHOUSE
22 EAST 6TH STREET, DEPT. 12
MANTORVILLE, MINNESOTA 55955
TELEPHONE (507) 624-7010

Dear Summoned Juror:

A foundation of the American justice system is the jury trial. Jury trials across the State of Minnesota have been postponed since mid-March as part of the battle to stop the spread of COVID-19. But now Minnesota is restarting jury trials. To do that, we need citizen jurors.

As we begin to once again schedule and hold jury trials, the Minnesota Judicial Branch, including the Third Judicial District here in southeastern Minnesota, is taking precautions for the safety of our citizen jurors. Our goal is to protect the rule of law and gradually resume normal functions in our courts while at the same time protecting the health of our community members who are exercising and performing their duties, responsibilities, and rights in our courthouses.

The Minnesota Judicial Branch has been working closely with the Minnesota Department of Health and local public health agencies to restart jury trials as safely as possible. First, while you are still at home, you may be asked to fill out an online questionnaire that will help expedite the jury selection process.

Second, you will be called to the courthouse only when a trial is ready to start. The jury assembly space at the courthouse will be large enough for safe social distancing. You will be questioned in the courthouse in the usual manner used for jury selection but only in small numbers and possibly on an individual basis, rather than in the standard, large group setting. This will also allow for safe social distancing to be maintained as the jury is selected.

Once a jury is selected and seated, jurors will be spread out throughout the courtroom to hear the case, again to allow for social distancing. All of our courtrooms have been carefully mapped and marked to help us observe proper distancing during the trial. Once the courtroom has reached its maximum capacity consistent with safe distancing, no additional persons will be permitted to enter. Juries will deliberate in another room large enough to accommodate minimum six-foot distancing.

We will provide disposable face masks for each juror's use, but jurors are also welcome to bring and wear their own masks if they prefer. The Minnesota Judicial Branch requires court participants to wear masks, and our judges may *require* that masks be worn in the courtrooms where they preside.

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Finally, each courthouse in the Third Judicial District has developed a special cleaning protocol for court operations, including a thorough daily cleaning of courtrooms in use. We will also have plenty of hand sanitizer available.

Our objective is to reopen our courts for jury trials in order to continue our obligation to the administration of justice while also doing our best to ensure the health and safety of all persons taking part in those trials. These special procedures, new to us all, will no doubt present some challenges. But the most basic characteristic of an American jury trial – *fairness* to all participants – will be the same as ever. Citizen jurors are, of course, an indispensable part of that. Doing one's duty as a juror is always a selfless act of community service and patriotism. That has never been more true than it is right now.

If you have questions, please call your county's court administration office. The telephone number is located on your juror summons. We want to address any concerns or misgivings that jurors may have during this unique time.

Thank you for your vital service to Minnesota and your community.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jodi L. Williamson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jodi L. Williamson
Chief Judge
Third Judicial District