



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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D.C. Superior Court Issues Bench Warrants for Jury Duty No-Shows

WASHINGTON, D.C. – D.C. Superior Court Chief Judge Rufus King III announced today that he had issued bench warrants for nearly 100 people who had failed to appear on their date of jury service, and had not appeared before him at a ‘show cause’ hearing that was scheduled for them to explain their absence. Those for whom bench warrants have been issued are subject to arrest at any time, and will then be detained by law enforcement until they can be brought before a judge.

In 2001, the Superior Court instituted a program by which those who are registered but do not appear for jury duty receive a summons from the Chief Judge ordering them to appear for a show cause hearing to explain why they should not be held in contempt of court for their absence. The penalty for failure to appear for jury duty includes fines of up to \$300 or up to seven days in jail. Comparable penalties may be imposed for contempt of court for failure to appear when summoned to a show cause hearing.

“Jury duty is every citizen’s responsibility. Our Constitution provides that every person is considered innocent until proven guilty by a jury of their peers. That system won’t work unless each and every one of us takes our civic responsibility seriously. Many people willingly participate in the jury system and most of them find it a rewarding experience; however others ignore their jury summons. It is unfair for some D.C. residents to fulfill their responsibility and others to shirk it,” said Chief Judge King. “While my preference is certainly not to issue bench warrants for D.C. residents, people have to comply with court summonses and show cause orders. Jury duty is not voluntary, but a mandatory civic responsibility.”

The District of Columbia jury system requires service for “one trial or one day.” This means that a juror is required to show up and serve on a jury for the duration of one trial. Most trials last three or four days. If a juror is not selected for a trial, jury service is complete, and he or she may leave at the end of the day. Jury service is only required once every two years in D.C. Those who receive a jury duty summons and want to reschedule can do so on-line <https://www.dccourts.gov/secure/jurorservices/juror/index.jsp> or by calling 202/879-4604.

Anyone who is concerned that a bench warrant may have been issued for them should go to the Criminal Division’s Warrant Office in room 4002 of the Moultrie Courthouse, Monday through Friday, 8:30 am to 5 pm (phone: 202/ 879-1380). Anyone concerned about not showing up for jury duty in the past should call 202/ 879-4604 to reschedule his or her jury service.

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