

GRAND JURY REPORT JULY – AUGUST 2013

The Grand Jury of July and August 2013 would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone involved in the criminal justice system here in Christian County. We extend a big thank you to the judges, prosecutors, and law enforcement officers – particularly the detectives and K-9 officers – who demonstrate a true dedication to their work every day. We all leave here with a much better understanding and appreciation of how the criminal justice system operates. While we do not feel that \$12.50 is adequate for any juror who has to make sacrifices to satisfy their civic duty, we did consider our service on this Grand Jury a very enlightening experience.

During our term, we heard facts involving a number of benefit fraud cases. It was appalling to find out how people are defrauding the system and robbing the state and taxpayers of money. We feel that **when an application is submitted**, whether it be for Food Stamps, Unemployment Benefits, or any of the other benefits provided through our state and federal government, more time should be spent in investigating the applicant and reviewing their status to determine if they, in fact, are eligible to receive benefits. We realize that caseworkers have a heavy load, but we believe that earlier detection of falsified applications or re-certifications would save the Commonwealth of Kentucky a great deal of money. Other tools that should be utilized are checks of property owned by the recipients, required job training programs, and monitoring of how the benefits are utilized. We also feel strongly about mandates of drug testing and unannounced home visits to ensure that those people actually deserve the benefits that they are receiving.

Stringent procedures have been effectively put into place and utilized by Christian County's Child Support Enforcement Office – making them one of the highest ranked counties in Kentucky for child support collections. We were very impressed with their efforts in collecting child support for the many children in our county who have been neglected by one or more of their parents for an inordinate amount of time. We would like to commend the County Attorney's Office, and particularly Hon. Lindsey Adams, for their hard work and dedication to this cause.

Throughout our term on the Grand Jury, we were given the opportunity to hear and deliberate on a variety of criminal cases; however, there seemed to be an inordinately large number of drug related cases that involved repeat offenders. It seems that drug dealers are not serving nearly enough of their sentences to deter them from getting out and picking up where they left off. It also appears that the trafficking of drugs and criminal gang activity – sometimes very violent acts - seem to be so prevalent in our community that these issues are often ignored.

Way too many criminals are getting by with a slap on the hand and one or two nights in the jail. They are then released back out on our streets to continue with their criminal activities. The news is full of politicians crying that our prisons and jails are too full, and they seem to be too focused on creating ways to release the inmates before they have served an adequate sentence as punishment for their crimes. It does not appear that they are taking into account that many of these inmates are repeat offenders and/or individuals who started their criminal careers at a young age and continue on the path of breaking the law, rather than trying to change their lifestyle upon release. We believe that incarceration should not include the benefits that most of us have to work hard for, such as cable television and computers. Inmates should be required to work during the daylight hours and then be restricted to their cells. Maybe such conditions would be more successful in deterring them from future criminal behaviors upon their return to our communities.

We want to encourage our legislators to take these things into consideration and do more to protect the innocent citizens of Christian County and the Commonwealth of Kentucky from the criminal element. It seems that they are too quick to enact laws that provide more leniency to criminals, without considering the concerns of law-abiding citizens and crime victims. We would encourage them to consult with grand jurors from any county in the state as they consider any future amendments to our criminal laws.

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CHRISTIAN COUNTY GRAND JURY
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