

March-April 2016 Grand Jury Report

It was a privilege and an honor to serve on the Grand Jury. Over the past few months, not only did we fulfill a civic duty and serve our community but we also got to see how the laws of our Commonwealth work. Most of us were not experienced about the jury's responsibilities or legal terms, but Commonwealth's Attorney Lynn Pryor explained the rules and legal terms so that we could make sound and responsible decisions. The hospitality and environment allowed us to work as a team and stay focused throughout the day.

Over the last two months, many cases were presented to us. It was amazing to see how much work was involved in keeping the system working for justice. We knew that serving on the Grand Jury was not going to be pretty, and some cases were extremely difficult to hear such as child abuse and sex crimes. As we only spent a few months discussing these cases, we realize that it must take special people to deal with these crimes on a daily basis. Thankfully the court staff and all of the Grand Jury witnesses were completely professional and experienced.

Surprisingly, a great deal of cases were drug related. This is a huge cost to the court and an emotional burden on our community. It is tough to hear how many families are affected by drugs. No one likes to hear that their home town is riddled with these problems. We now have a greater respect for the officers that risk their lives and give their time to protect us and the court that spends countless hours making sure the law is held high.

We did hear a report from Christian County Clerk Mike Kem about the special election that occurred in March to fill one of our state representative positions. We would encourage everyone to vote and to serve as poll workers during future elections, if they are able.

We would also like to suggest a more proactive approach in the disbursement of state benefits, instead of operating on the honor system. If the state would perform routine checks on a recipient's employment and household makeup, many instances of fraud could be detected before the state allocates benefits to those who are not entitled to receive them. It is a shame that we fault prison costs for our current budget crisis when a great deal of money could be saved by a small amount of investigation.

While the Grand Jury experience was an honor, the compensation pay seemed very low. Now that the national minimum wage is increasing, we feel that the future jury pay should also increase.

Andrew M Sparks II
Foreperson

4-22-2016
Date