



# news

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## **Sixteenth Judicial District orders summoned jurors who failed to appear for jury duty to answer to the Court**

LA JUNTA – In the past week a lack of citizen response to jury summonses has resulted in the Court issuing “Show Cause Orders,” or citations to appear before the Court, to people who failed to appear for jury duty as required by law. The Show Cause Orders will be mailed in the coming days.

“Since the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District resumed holding jury trials in February 2021, citizen responses to jury summonses have been poor and it serves as a detriment to our system of justice,” Sixteenth Judicial District Chief Judge Mark A. MacDonnell said. “Jury trials are a hallmark of our system of justice, and we cannot preserve this fundamental right without citizen participation.”

On June 8, 2021, after two full days of jury selection at Otero Junior College’s Ed Stafford Theater, Chief Judge MacDonnell was forced to declare a mistrial due to the Court’s inability to seat a jury.

A total of 175 jury summonses were issued for Chief Judge MacDonnell’s trial and 89 people reported. In all, 40 people summoned for jury duty did not contact the court to be excused in advance of the trial.

As further evidence of poor juror turnout, on the same day that jury selection began at Otero Junior College, jury selection was taking place for another District Court trial at the Otero County Courthouse. For this trial, 100 jurors were summoned to appear and only 41 answered the call to civic duty. That trial has been continued and jury summonses will again be issued.

“It is with great displeasure that the 16<sup>th</sup> Judicial District proceeds with this process, but if the citizens of the counties that make up the district wish to continue enjoying their system of

justice, they must be willing to sacrifice for it in the way of jury service when called upon,” Chief Judge MacDonnell said. “The Court has many responsibilities to the public it serves, and as such the Court and public have a right to know why these people chose to not fulfill one of their most important civic duties.”

Those individuals served with Show Cause Orders will be required to appear before the Court on July 20, 2021, between 8:30 a.m. and noon. Penalties could include fines and/or imprisonment for failing to by abide the Court’s order, or for failing to appear on July 20, 2021.