

For Immediate Release

NOT REGISTERING TO VOTE DOES NOT PREVENT JURY DUTY

You do not have to vote to be called for jury duty, according to Liberty County Clerk of Superior Court.

“Three years ago, state legislators changed the law so that every citizen of Georgia who is 18 years of age and older is eligible for jury duty unless he or she has been legally “inactivated” from jury service. Ultimately, names of jurors come from the state drivers’ license rolls,” Wilkes said.

He explained that the Council of Superior Court Clerks of Georgia, the state agency that creates the jury list for each of the state’s 159 counties, obtains citizens names and identifying information from the state’s Department of Driver Services. Additionally the council uses the state’s voter registration list as an additional source list. “However, there are only a handful of citizens whose names make onto county jury lists merely as the result of registering to vote since they would become eligible anyway because they have a driver’s license. So, not voting is definitely not going to keep anyone from being summoned for jury duty,” Wilkes explained.

Before laws governing how jury pools are created were amended in 2011, the county jury commission was required to scour the county to find names and identifying information for potential jurors. They were required by law to produce a pool of potential trial jurors that was representative of the community. There had to be a pool large enough to meet the needs of superior court and state court, the two local courts that are authorized by law to conduct jury trials. Furthermore, state and federal law required balancing of the pool by race and gender so that there was less than five percent disparity in the number of persons by racial or sexual category in the jury pool as compared to the same categories revealed by the latest official U.S. Census figures for the county.

“The old system required paring down the number of persons whose names were on the list,” Wilkes said. “The new system is healthier for everyone concerned because, now, every person in the county who is not disqualified by law is eligible for jury service. Locally, we went from having a jury pool of 21,200 to more than 55,000. This helps diversify our jury pool while, at the same time, cutting down on the number of times that a small number of citizens are called on to serve. Every citizen has the opportunity to serve unless they are dead, have a valid medical or psychological excuse that permanently excuses him or her from service, or is convicted of a felony and has not had his or her civil rights restored.”

For answers to questions concerning jury duty, visit the Clerk’s Office website at www.libertyco.com/jury/Jury.html or call 369-JURY (5879).

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