



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT

PRESS RELEASE

TO: ALL INFORMATION MEDIA – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FROM: Gary M. Blair
Superior Court Executive Officer

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JURY SERVICE NO-SHOWS GET THE WORD: NO EXCUSES

The Superior Court of Santa Barbara County today announced the beginning of a tougher program to round up persons who willfully fail to appear for jury duty. The court has commenced a program to systematically track down those county residents who do not respond to their jury duty summonses and will enforce the penalties that California law allows for those refusing to serve.

Each U.S. citizen and California resident has a duty to serve. As jury reform proceeds in California, judges are now focusing on prospective jurors who ignore their summonses to report for duty. Although offered numerous chances to report or explain why they cannot serve, many residents continue to discard or ignore their jury summons. Yet, California law allows judges to fine or even jail jurors who refuse to serve, and judges are toughening up on enforcement of these penalties.

Yesterday, Presiding Judge J. William McLafferty, called an Order to Show Cause calendar for 19 Santa Barbara County citizens who had failed to respond to three prior jury summons to appear for jury duty. “We want to make sure that those citizens who follow the rules and report when called understand that we are enforcing the rules against the others who willfully fail to appear,” said Presiding Judge McLafferty.

Each person was given an opportunity to explain to the judge why he or she had failed to appear or contact the jury office in response to their summons and warning letter. All 19 citizens admitted that they had failed to appear in response to one or more of their three

summons and warning letter. In 14 of those cases, the judge imposed fines ranging from \$200 to \$350 and ordered those citizens to appear for jury duty within the next 30 days. The fine was waived in the other five cases due to extenuating circumstances, but those individuals were ordered to serve on jury duty within the next 30 days.

Superior Court Executive Officer, Gary Blair, stated: "The court's primary goals are to gain compliance rather than sanction non-responsive jurors and to impress upon local citizens the importance of jury duty. The more jurors reporting for jury duty, the less frequently jurors will be called for service, the faster trials can move forward, and the better our system of justice will operate."

If a person does not respond to the initial jury summons, the court will send a second summons. If the summoned juror does not respond to the second summons, then the juror will receive a delinquency notice letter. If there is still no response, the juror will be personally served with an order stating that the non-responsive juror must come to court for an Order to Show Cause hearing regarding why he or she should not be fined. Should a person fail to appear at the hearing, the court will issue a warrant for his or her arrest.

When the first jury summons arrives, if the recipient has a valid reason for postponing service or a legal reason to be excused, that reason can be written on the summons in the blanks provided and mailed back to the court. A person will only be contacted if their request is denied or if further information is needed to process the request.

A Juror Order to Show Cause calendar will be heard by Assistant Presiding Judge Art Garcia in Santa Maria in July. The court will be hearing Juror Order to Show Cause calendars twice each month.

For further information or the date of an Order to Show Cause hearing, please contact Mark Hanson, Judicial Services Supervisor in Santa Barbara at 882-4539, or Lori Hornbrook, Judicial Services Supervisor in Santa Maria at 614-6425.

The Santa Barbara County Superior Court website is: www.sbcourts.org

The California juror website is: www.courtinfo.ca.gov/jury/