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## Truant Jurors Arrested, Shackled

POSTED BY [JASON CHERKIS](#) on Jul. 10, 2008, at 2:57 pm

Last week, **D.C. Superior Court** issued **100 bench warrants** to residents who failed to show up for jury duty and had failed to appear before a “show-cause” hearing to explain their absence. It had been years since the court had utilized the bench-warrant tactic. But it provided this result:



Earlier this week, five residents were taken into custody, according to court spokesperson **Leah Gurowitz**. These five spent some time behind bars. At least some, appeared before a judge—to explain their jury-duty failings—in shackles.

In an e-mail, Gurowitz explained the court’s actions:

“The Superior Court issued bench warrants only for those people who had ignored two court orders: a jury summons and an order to appear at a ‘show cause hearing’ to explain their failure to appear for jury service. Our goal is not to arrest people, but to underscore the requirement of obeying court orders and the importance of jury duty. It is not fair to those who do serve jury duty for others to simply ignore it.

“Anyone concerned that they may have a bench warrant issued in their name as a result of ignoring jury duty and show cause notice should call the Jurors Office at 879-4604. Anyone who has recently skipped jury duty should do the same. The Court has made great efforts to make jury service as convenient as possible: you can register and defer on-line, there is a child care center at the courthouse, and there is a quiet room and WiFi for those who want to work while serving jury duty. But for those who shirk their civic duty, there are consequences.”

More than a dozen other residents responded to the bench warrant in some fashion without being arrested. This means there are still plenty more residents with outstanding warrants for their arrest.

I guess I need to say it again. People: **Jury Duty Is No Joke.**

**Update 3:34 p.m.:** According to Gurowitz, all five residents who were arrested, appeared before Chief Judge **Rufus King III**. They appeared before the Chief Judge in shackles. “Those taken into custody ‘involuntarily’ are in ankle shackles until released,” Gurowitz explains.

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