

Final Report of the Davidson County Grand Jury

January Term 2026

January 6, 2026 – March 19, 2026

Judge Jim Todd, Criminal Court Division III

Foreperson: Brooke Farzad

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Davidson County
Criminal Court Clerk
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BY *TK*
Deputy Clerk

I. Overview of Experience

Our session of the Grand Jury for Davidson County, after having been sworn in, met weekly on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from January 6th to March 19th. The Grand Jury did not meet on January 27-28, 2026, due to the historic ice storm in Nashville. Our panel was composed of a diverse group of Davidson County citizens who varied in age, race, and gender.

Serving on the Grand Jury provided us with a unique and informative perspective on the complexities of the legal system. We engaged in thorough deliberations, carefully considering the facts presented to determine if probable cause existed for each case. Each juror understood the significance of the oath they took and adhered closely to the charge given by Judge Todd. We understood our responsibility was to determine probable cause that a crime had been committed and that the defendant committed the crime. We listened carefully to the evidence presented, and asked questions to ensure the facts supported the elements of the crime charged. When we deliberated, we did so civilly and respected the position of each member of the Grand Jury. Where we believed the facts supported additional charges, we consulted with the ADAs and requested new or additional counts. When we were concerned the facts did not support the elements of the crime, we asked the witness to provide additional information to allow us to carry out our charge. On occasion, when we believed the interest of justice would not be served, we did not return a True Bill.

II. Case Information

During this term, the Grand Jury deliberated on the following:

- **Total Cases Heard:** 1017
- **True Bills Returned:** 1009
- **No True Bills:** 8

During our term, the cases were presented by an array of witnesses from law enforcement and loss prevention. These witnesses were well prepared and testified in a professional manner. The Grand Jury would particularly like to highlight the exceptional work of Sgt. Spencer, who presented most of the evidence we reviewed this term. He consistently maintained a high standard of clarity, ensuring that even the most varied cases were easy to follow. We deeply appreciated his approachability; he never hesitated to provide further clarification or answer our

technical legal questions, proving himself to be a true asset to the Metropolitan Police Department.

Most presentments were DUIs, domestic assaults, aggravated assaults, sale and use of controlled substances, thefts, robberies, burglaries, homicides, sexual abuse and/or exploitation of minors, rapes and sexual assault. We were dismayed by the sheer number of cases involving domestic violence, and the number of repeat domestic violence offenders who were out on bond.

III. Educational Activities & Facility Tours

To enhance our understanding of the resources available to victims and the correctional process, our panel participated in several informational presentations and a Facility Tour:

- **Downtown Detention Center / CJC Tour:** The panel toured the Davidson County Sheriff's Office Detention Center and Behavioral Care Center, guided by Viranda Smith. This provided insight into the arrest-to-pretrial process. We were particularly impressed by the Behavioral Care Center, how it addresses crimes stemming from mental health and substance abuse issues through personalized treatment plans.
- **Guest Speakers:** During our term, we heard from the following guest speakers:
 - Judge Jim Todd, Criminal Court Division III
 - General Glenn Funk, Metro Nashville District Attorney
 - Jay Martin, Assistant District Attorney
 - Josh Beauchesne, Detective Metro Police-Domestic Violence Div.
 - John Grubbs, Detective Metro Police-Youth Services
 - Leanna Dugan, Our Kids
 - Larissa Burdette, Davidson Co. Community Corrections Manager
 - John Drake, Chief of the Metro Police Department
 - Vanessa Martinucci, Director, MNPD Crime Lab

The first two weeks of our term included presentations from these individuals, which we found very helpful as they improved our understanding of the process and aided us in making informed determinations. We were also impressed by the work ethic and dedication of these public servants.

IV. Key Concerns of the Grand Jury

- **Domestic Violence:** We remain concerned by the high volume of domestic violence cases. We recommend swifter penalties and mandatory jail time for those who violate Orders of Protection. We also think there should be stricter bond rules for those charged in domestic violence cases, especially those who have a history of domestic violence.
- **Crimes Against Children:** The frequency of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation cases involving children is alarming. We believe justice for these vulnerable victims is often delayed too long and that individuals charged with these types of crimes should not be out on bond where they can continue to pose a threat to children. Additionally, the

Grand Jury believes that those committing offenses against minors should be prosecuted to the fullest extent. For example, where the rape of a minor is videorecorded, it is the recommendation of this Grand Jury that individuals, such as those photographing or videorecording rape and sexual abuse of minors, should be criminally charged and held accountable to the fullest extent of the law. The Grand Jury also strongly believes that those in positions of authority who are mandated by law to report sexual abuse of minors to the authorities, should be held accountable for their actions and charged appropriately when they fail to report these offenses. Mandatory reporting laws were enacted to protect these vulnerable victims and the safety and wellbeing of the child should always take precedence over any other reason the person may have for not reporting. Accordingly, the Grand Jury recommends that the District Attorney's Office fully investigate all individuals involved in these types of cases to assess additional appropriate charges and prosecute those individuals to the fullest extent under the law.

- **Repeat Offenders:** A significant portion of the violent crimes and retail thefts reviewed involved repeat offenders. There is a collective sense that current punishments and low bond amounts are not effectively deterring recidivism and there needs to be more accountability. The judges need to set higher bonds and in many cases, not release these repeat offenders pre-trial to commit further crimes in our community.

V. Grand Jury Recommendations

1. **Bond Consistency:** Implement more consistent and higher bond amounts for violent crimes, domestic assault, crimes against children and sexual assault offenses to ensure public safety.
2. **Grand Jury Initiation:** We recommend 1–2 full days of "initiation" for future jurors to better define legal terms and room procedures before hearing cases. Our grand jury foreperson, Brooke Farzad, was a former federal prosecutor and was able to help explain many of the laws and elements of the crimes. However, the grand jury believes it would be tremendously helpful to have an orientation on the law of the most frequent charges. We recommend that the DA's office provide a presentation on these common charges, including the elements and penalties for each. This would be very helpful at the outset before the grand jury begins hearing cases.
3. **Videos and Photos:** The grand jury found video and photo evidence to be extremely helpful in case presentations. While many of the law enforcement witnesses presented video and photo evidence, there were a number of homicide or serious violent offense cases where the presenter did not bring the video footage and summarized what they saw instead. We understand that not everyone may want to view some of these graphic images but they should be available to those who want to view them in the grand jury room regardless.

VI. Acknowledgments

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the professionals who guided us through this process:

- Sgt. Michael Spencer & MNPD Liaisons: For providing clear, professional, and concise case summaries.
- District Attorney Glenn Funk & Staff: Especially ADA Jay Martin, for providing legal guidance and clarifying complex charges.
- Lori Hooberry: For her essential assistance in managing the Grand Jury room and logistics.

Finally, we thank the citizens of Davidson County for the opportunity to serve. This experience has deepened our respect for those working to ensure justice and safety in our community.

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Grand Jury Panel Members

 _____ Brooke Farzad, Foreperson	 _____ Jennifer A. Carlisle
 _____ Roderick Cartwright	 _____ Lazette Davis
 _____ Sheraneka Guest	 _____ Kellie Hall-Parker
 _____ Cynthia Mitchell	 _____ Ryan Purcell
 _____ Maria Ridley	 _____ Valerie Sain
 _____ Melinda Samuel	 _____ Ivan Sobek
 _____ Gracelynn Toedter	 _____ Terri Turaville
 _____ Sophia Tucker	

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Alternate Grand Jury Panel Members

<u>Irina Allen</u> Irina Allen	<u>Ramsey Doran</u> Ramsey Doran
<u>Colton Franklin</u> Colton Franklin	<u>Cynthia Hoeger</u> Cynthia Hoeger
<u>William Waites</u> William Waites	<u>Lisa Taylor</u> Lisa Taylor