

Davidson County Grand Jury  
Criminal Court- Division III  
Judge Cheryl Blackburn  
July – September 2024 Term

### Our Experience

Our term began on July 10<sup>th</sup> and concluded on September 26<sup>th</sup> of 2024. During this time, we heard 659 cases with 654 of those cases being found to meet the requirements of a true bill.

Serving on the Grand Jury has provided us with a unique perspective as we reviewed numerous cases spanning a vast array of infractions. Each session illuminated the complexities of the legal system and the varied circumstances surrounding each case. From minor offenses to more serious allegations, we witnessed firsthand the careful deliberation required to assess evidence and make informed decisions. This experience has deepened our appreciation for the judicial process and the important role we play in ensuring fairness and justice in our community.

Our cases were presented to us by a range of law enforcement, loss prevention, specialists from Our Kids, and animal enforcement. Sgt. Spencer was the liaison to the police department that handled the bulk of the cases. He clearly stated the facts, provided us with clarity on any questions we had, and delivered the information in a professional manner. We appreciated his time, understanding, and the opportunity to work with him. Parker Toler was our Grand Jury Foreperson. He helped us to understand the process, keep us focused on the task at hand, and guided us through any questions or concerns. He is a great asset to the Grand Jury.

Presenters with the ability to clearly summarize the events of the incident provided us with confidence in our decision making. It helped us to organize our thoughts and question any pieces that we found to be missing. Our group found that presentations, especially for complex cases, were the best manner to process the information provided.

Our group was fortunate to have participated in field trips that enhanced our understanding of the resources available to victims. This includes the incredible work being done at the Behavioral Care Center, Family Safety Center, and Nashville Children's Alliance. These experiences provided invaluable insights into the various agencies and the vital services they offer. Through engaging presentations, we gained a clearer picture of the processes involved in maintaining public safety and community support. This hands-on learning not only broadened our knowledge but also highlighted the collaborative efforts of these agencies to serve and protect our community effectively.

## Key Takeaways from Our Grand Jury Experience

An alarming number of sex crimes against women and children was heard during this term and is a significant concern within our community, highlighting urgent issues that demand our attention and action. One of the most pressing challenges is the extensive backlog in DNA processing, which can take nearly two years. This delay not only prolongs the suffering of victims seeking justice but also allows potential offenders to remain free, posing continued threats to the community. It is imperative that we advocate for streamlined procedures within forensic laboratories to ensure timely processing of evidence, thereby enhancing the efficacy of law enforcement and providing critical support to victims. A common question that was asked when hearing cases against children was the safety of the child to ensure that they are now away from their abuser and any enablers of the abuse. We would also like to note the deep admiration to the detectives, and all involved in these cases.

Our group heard numerous cases involving firearms, ranging from murder and attempted murder to incidents of domestic violence and reckless endangerment. These cases underscore the critical challenges our communities face regarding gun-related violence. Each case highlights the profound impact that access to firearms can have on individuals and families, often resulting in tragic and irreversible consequences. We are seeing these crimes most prevalent in teens and repeat offenders. Young individuals are increasingly becoming both perpetrators and victims of firearm-related incidents. There is a great need to implement preventive measures that address the root causes of violence and promote healthy conflict resolution.

Alcohol and drug-related crimes present significant challenges to public safety and community well-being. Each session we heard cases of individuals driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs that impaired their abilities. It brought a concern to our group of the number of drivers with multiple offenses. We also heard of drug distribution in and out of the jail system. Many of the drug sales on the streets were busted thanks the hard work of the police and the time designated to the surveillance of areas known for drug activity.

These sessions also brought to light the number of retail thefts taking place in our community. Retail theft can lead to increased prices as businesses attempt to recover losses, placing an additional financial burden on consumers. During our term we frequently heard the same names committing these offenses and feel that the current punishments for these crimes are not deterring these individuals.

Throughout our term we heard many incidents involving repeat offenders. These incidents included thefts, DUIs, gun violence, and drug distribution. Stricter penalties for individuals who repeatedly commit crimes are needed to deter future offenses, hold offenders accountable and protect communities from ongoing harm.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the grand jury. This experience has been both enlightening and impactful, allowing us to gain a deeper understanding of the judicial process and the vital role we play in upholding justice. We appreciate the trust placed in us to fulfill this important responsibility and the chance to contribute to our community in such a meaningful way.

We are grateful to the police and detectives for their unwavering dedication and hard work. Their commitment to ensuring the safety of our community is truly commendable, as they tirelessly investigate crimes, provide support to victims, and work to uphold justice. The challenges they face on a daily basis are significant, yet they consistently demonstrate professionalism and resilience. Their efforts do not go unnoticed, and we deeply appreciate all that they do.

We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to the District Attorney's Office for their invaluable support and dedication. They answered our questions and provided clarity of any laws needed for our group. District Attorney Glenn Funk took the time to meet with us, offering valuable insights into their vision for Nashville and the commendable efforts they are making to address mental health issues. They are committed to fostering a safe, happy, and healthy Nashville for all residents.

Grand Jury Report  
July Term 2024  
July 10, 2024 – September 26, 2024  
Parker Toler, Foreperson

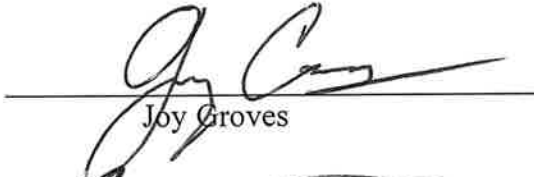
Grand Jury Panel Members




Parker Toler



Amanda Boone



Joy Groves



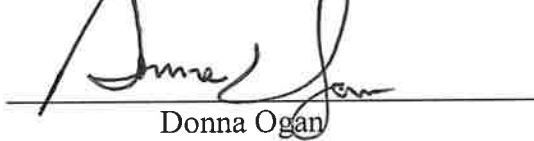
Patricia Hardison




Judah Miller



Gail Normandeau



Donna Ogan



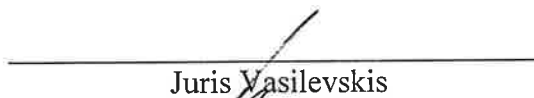
Tressa Reed



Kimberly Samples



Meg Thorpe



Juris Vasilevskis



Denelle West



William Wood

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Alternate Grand Jury Panel Members

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Courtney Alma

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Linda Benjamin

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Brian Brinkman

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Gary Cole

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Belachew Damte

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Brendan Farst

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Christie McClintock

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Thomas Miller

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Ashton Mitchell

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JENNIFER VRABEL

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HOPE HALEY

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