

# **Final Report of the Grand Jury**

**October Term 2025**

(October 06 – December 11)

Criminal Court, Division II

Judge Angelita Blackshear Dalton

Davidson County, Tennessee

The Davidson County Grand Jury convened weekly during the October 2025 term on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays to fulfill their civic duty as U.S citizens of reviewing and deliberating on criminal cases. We did not meet Veterans Day and the week of Thanksgiving. The panel, composed of a diverse group of community members that vary in age, gender and race, examined a broad spectrum of cases and engaged in thorough discussions to reach decisions on indictments.

## Cases Reviewed

The grand jury heard cases involving:

- Driving Under the Influence (DUI)
- Sexual Assault
- Domestic Violence
- Property and Personal Theft
- Personal theft of merchandise
- Murder
- Child Sexual Abuse and Neglect

This term, we heard a total of 840 cases, with 831 being True bills and 9 No true bills after deliberations and reflecting careful consideration of evidence and legal standards.

## Educational Activities

- **Facility Tours:** 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. The panel also had the opportunity to speak with one of the Judicial Commissioners and ask some questions and to get some insight on his role with the legal system.
- **Speaker Presentations:**
  - Vanessa Martinucci, MPD Crime Lab
  - Chief John Drake, MNPD
  - Glenn Funk, District Atty. General
  - Martasha Moore-Johnson, Metro Public Defender
  - John Grubbs, MPD Youth Service
  - Leanna Dugan, Our Kids

- Larissa Burdette, Davidson County Community Corrections Manager
- Micheal Claire Bottoms, Asst. District Atty.
- Matthew Turppa, Domestic Violence MPD

## Acknowledgments

- **Sgt. Michael Spencer:** Commended for clear and concise case presentations.
- **Asst. District Attorney Jay Martin & his team:** Recognized for legal guidance and clarification of complex charges.
- Appreciation also extended to law enforcement, detectives, and firefighters for their dedication to public safety.

## Key Concerns:

### 1. MPD Crime Lab Delays

- Medical-legal exam results delayed up to **2 years**.
- Rape kit backlog exceeding **9 months**.
- Impact: Victims wait for justice while suspects sometimes remain free on bond
- These systemic issues are critical to ensure timely justice and maintaining the public trust in the legal system.
  - **Concerns:** Is the issue with crime lab space or just staffing? If the budget has increased- Have all authorized positions been filled as well as maximized authorized contract services? If not, why not?
  - **Recommendation:** Allocate budget for additional staff to expedite evidence processing.

### 2. Public Defender Shortages (Per Public Defender Presentation)

- Department staffed with **122 personnel**, only **60 attorneys**.
- Excessive caseloads lead to trial delays of **3–4 years**.
- Some clients turned away due to resource constraints.
- These delays are unacceptable due to “justice delay is justice denied” for victims and defendants.
 

**Concern:** Is State Government contributing an equitable portion of funding comparable to other urban jurisdictions in the state?

- **Recommendation:** Increase funding to hire more attorneys and reduce case backlog.

## **Conclusion**

The Grand Jury emphasizes the urgent need for systemic improvements in evidence processing and public defense resources. These changes are critical to ensuring timely justice for victims and fair representation for defendants.

## **Recommendations:**

**License plate readers** are very much needed in Metro Nashville Davidson County. All neighboring counties and satellite police departments in Davidson County (Berry-Hill, Belle Meade, Goodlettsville, etc.) have them already. These resources would be a valuable tool in the positive identification process of criminal suspects.

## **Grand Jury Initiation Days**

Grand Jurors would like to institute 1-2 full days for "Grand Jury initiation" for future grand Juries, wherein some legal criminal justice terms and Grand Jury room procedures are better defined for jurors who are unfamiliar with them.

These days could also be used to tour the Criminal Justice Complex, jail, etc. Grand jurors benefited greatly from having some familiarization with those facilities and from some of the presentations given by the District Attorney, the Public Defender, MNPd, Chief Drake and others. Starting the process with this fresh knowledge would help grand jurors jumpstart the proceeding with fewer interruptions to ask procedural questions in the opening weeks.

More clearly define the probable cause determination process and the explanation of the different key elements of probable cause. Are motive and intent really needed to be known to determine probable cause? Also, implement a procedure where the additional regular grand jurors and alternates are allowed to vote each day as part of the 12 votes needed for a True Bill or No True Bill.

Foreperson: Warner Hassell Warner Hassell

Regular Grand Juror:

Stephanie Dauenhauer Stephanie Dauenhauer

Jeffery Kuhns Jeffery Kuhns

Susan Green Susan Green

Robert Doss Robert Doss

Shona Smith Shona Smith

Robin Pippin Robin Pippin

Jamie Case Jamie Case

Thomas Slater Thomas Slater

Steven Delle Steven Delle

Ernest McDonald Ernest McDonald

Lindsey Lake Lindsey Lake

Robert Suter Robert Suter

Curtis Baker Curtis Baker

Shauntay Johnson Shauntay Johnson

Assigned Alternate

Lacy Brown \_\_\_\_\_

Mary Frame \_\_\_\_\_

Rita Russell \_\_\_\_\_

Deangela Alexander \_\_\_\_\_

Aaron Wierenga \_\_\_\_\_

Marcia Wilson \_\_\_\_\_

Lauren Wynn \_\_\_\_\_

Jacqueline Salva \_\_\_\_\_

Keturah Barnett \_\_\_\_\_

Alexandria Mosley \_\_\_\_\_

Marcia Jordan \_\_\_\_\_

Rose Wood \_\_\_\_\_

Michael Oakes Michael Oakes

Harper Hawk Harper Hawk