

--JOHNSON COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
STATE OF KANSAS

**NEWS RELEASE**

**Photo Opportunity:** Chief Judge Steve Tatum has agreed to make himself available for follow-up questions and answers. Members of the media may telephone his office at (913) 715-3790 to schedule an interview.)

**For Immediate Release:** January 7, 2008

**Contact:** Johnson County District Court Administrator Michael S. McLain at (913) 715-3300

## **Johnson County judges receive high ratings by jurors in exit surveys**

OLATHE, KS (Johnson County Square) –Johnson County judges received high ratings by jurors who participated in the first-ever year-long exit surveys following jury duty during 2007.

More than 800 jurors completed questionnaires following completion of jury service during the year. They were asked to rate jury duty in 13 categories, including their opinion of the judges, the juror selection process, treatment by staff, and confidence in the legal system.

Chief Judge Steve Tatum said the Johnson County District Court surveyed jurors because as citizens they were in the best possible position to assess the judicial performance and the judicial process without prejudice.

“Additionally, these citizens are selected for jury duty in a random process that represents a cross section of the community,” Chief Judge Tatum said.

He said he is particularly pleased with the rating of judges and the treatment of jurors by court personnel. In these categories the scores were all in excess of 95 percent. However, lower scores were reflected in physical comforts and parking facilities, although they, too, were mostly favorable. Parking facilities had the highest unfavorable score at 18.2 percent, but Tatum said an expansion of the downtown Olathe parking garage is scheduled for completion in early spring, which should help to improve the parking situation. The project will increase the available parking spaces in the garage from 393 to 705.

The survey also showed that only 66.99 percent of the jurors had a favorable opinion of jury service prior to serving, but the rating increased to an 88.59 percent favorable rating after actually serving as a juror. This would suggest that the courts overcame preconceived opinions of jury service more negative than the actual experience.

“Importantly, the scores reflect confidence in the legal system and a positive professional image of judges and court officers,” Chief Judge Tatum said.

Court Administrator Mike McLain said the judges have found the survey results helpful and constructive. For example, new chairs have been added in certain jury rooms, more frequent breaks have been incorporated in some courts, and thermostats adjusted to accommodate the comfort of jurors.

Jury trials included criminal, civil, and juvenile cases. All responses were anonymous. The district court plans to continue surveying jurors in 2008.

In the past, Johnson County judges have been rated every two years by members of the Johnson County Bar Association as to their demeanor, legal ability, professionalism, courtesy, and other criteria of judicial performance. A similar judicial performance evaluation is to be

conducted at the state level this year.

“We think it is important that we continue to look for ways to improve our service to the citizens of Johnson County who are called upon to serve as jurors. Administering justice fairly and efficiently is a daily responsibility that we take very seriously,” Chief Judge Tatum said.

Following is a summary of the Johnson County juror exit poll results:

Rating of Judges	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Courtroom demeanor	96.95%	0.73%	0.0%
Fairness/Impartiality	96.58%	0.98%	0.12%
Courtesy	97.07%	0.49%	0.12%
Competence	96.22%	1.10%	0.0%

\*Some categories had no responses by individual jurors.

Jury Service	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Juror Summons (clarity, information)	95.63%	2.91%	0.36%
Telephone call-in system	92.27%	5.61%	0.34%
Treatment by courthouse staff	99.38%	0.37%	0.12%
Physical comforts (including jury room)	77.7%	15.76%	6.06%
Directions to the courthouse	92.94%	5.47%	0.73%
Parking facilities	64.56%	16.75%	18.2%

\*Some categories had no responses by individual jurors.

Opinion Regarding Jury Service	Favorable	Neutral	Unfavorable
Opinion of jury service before trial	66.99%	26.07%	5.84%
Opinion of jury service after trial	88.59%	8.15%	1.75%
Confidence in the legal system	87.45%	8.86%	2.71%

\*Some categories had no responses by individual jurors.