



# Marilyn Burgess

HARRIS COUNTY DISTRICT CLERK

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## PRESS RELEASE

### **Harris County District Clerk's Office begins Grand Jury calls at NRG Arena**

**District Clerk Marilyn Burgess thanks jurors for serving during the  
COVID-19 pandemic – The DCO implements robust public health measures**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Monday, July 6, 2020**

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Houston (TX) July 6 – Jury calls for Grand Juries resumed in Houston today and Harris County District Clerk Marilyn Burgess personally thanked the summoned jurors who came to NRG Arena and swore them in. Thirty summoned residents were in attendance during the 9 a.m. jury call.

These are the first jury calls held in Harris County since March, when jury service was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today's jury calls were held to form new Grand Juries for the following criminal district courts: 174<sup>th</sup>; 176<sup>th</sup>; 177<sup>th</sup>; 178<sup>th</sup>; and 179<sup>th</sup>.

Summoned jurors who prefer not to come to NRG Arena in person are also being given the option to participate in the jury calls via Zoom meetings that are scheduled at 3 p.m.

Grand Jurors review criminal complaints and decide whether there is sufficient evidence to issue an indictment. The five district courts will secure the 16 individuals needed (12 active jurors and four alternates) for each Grand Jury. The first day of appearance for the new Grand Jurors will be August 3.

"I know it's hard to be away from families and work right now. That's why I am immensely grateful for your selfless participation and I know everyone working for or appearing before the courts feels the same way," said Ms. Burgess before swearing in the jurors. The jury calls were immediately followed by voir dire.

The Harris County District Clerk's Office (DCO), in conjunction with Harris County Public Health, the county's Engineering Department, and the Harris County Jury Committee, is following a robust public health and safety plan at NRG Arena. The venue was chosen for its spaciousness because it guarantees social distancing. Every summoned juror and staffer is screened at the gate to NRG Park for COVID-19 symptoms and must pass a temperature check, as well as answer a series of questions.



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In addition, any person entering NRG Park for jury proceedings must wear a mask or face covering and observe social distancing. Individuals who arrive without a mask are given one before entering the venue. Furthermore, the venue has been equipped with hand sanitizer stations to encourage hand hygiene. Finally, there are ground markers to guide social distancing throughout the facility, and jurors are seated more than six feet apart.

All prospective jurors are pre-registered online before arrival and may check in at one of the DCO's new touchscreen kiosks located in the NRG Arena lobby. The kiosks are sanitized frequently throughout the day, gloves are provided, and the arena hall is sanitized each morning, as well as between each jury call.

The county has also contracted with a shuttle service to pick up and drop off jurors who come to NRG Park on METRORail and METRO bus services. Jurors may board at several convenient stops to be driven to NRG Arena. They also undergo a health screening in the shuttle before entering the NRG Park complex.

Jury calls for Grand Jurors will continue throughout Monday, July 13, while regular jury service has been postponed until September.

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