

# Lincoln County Swears its First Grand Jury

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On October 14, 2011 Jurors were sworn in for the first Grand Jury in Lincoln County's history. Four cases were heard by the 15 selected jurors.

Prosecuting Attorney Leah Wommack Askey, who was instrumental in bringing the grand jury to Lincoln County, says there are many reasons this system helps the judicial process.

"Grand juries expedite the judicial process which costs taxpayers less and moves cases more quickly." Said Askey.

Grand jury proceedings are not open to the public and typically the defendant is not present which makes the proceeding more comfortable for the victims of these cases. "Allowing cases to be heard by the grand jury as opposed to a preliminary trial minimizes exposure for our young victims and protects the identity of our undercover agents thus resulting in more favorable case outcomes and less trauma for the victim." says Prosecuting Attorney Leah Wommack Askey.

The Grand Jury is the oldest form of judicial process in this country and has been utilized in various parts of Missouri dating back as early as our first state constitution. The prosecutor's office can choose to bring a case to a grand jury instead of having a preliminary hearing. In this process, private citizens are chosen like jurors and nine (9) of twelve (12) must agree on whether there is enough probable cause to believe the defendant committed the crime alleged in order to issue an indictment.

The Grand Jury pool is a random selection that is determined from the master list of Lincoln County registered jurors. The jurors are then selected by Presiding Judge Dan Dildine. Jurors will serve for six (6) month terms. The grand jurors are separate from the Petit or what people think of as "normal" jurors in that they actively participate at least one time each month during their term.

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