

"We picked 20 for each panel this past December," Cook said. "That allows us plenty of people to choose from in case somebody's sick or can't make it in for any other reason."



Grand jurors aren't special and are picked from the same group of people as the other jurors.

"When you get called in," Cook said, "if you're at the front, you'll probably be on the grand jury."

A grand jury's job is to listen to a prosecutor make a case against somebody and decide if the case needs to go on to Criminal Court. An indictment by this body is not a sign of guilt. They can even conduct investigations on their own if they wish. The proceedings are kept completely confidential and no one is allowed in to watch, not even Cook.

"No one knows what they've decided until the session is over," Cook said, "and they release their findings."

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## Gary Pettway replaced as grand jury foreman

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Author: Michael Thomason  
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After turmoil over how long a grand jury foreperson seat can be held in Tennessee, Judge Amy Reedy quietly replaced the longtime Monroe County Grand Jury foreperson in January.

Gary Pettway had held the position for more than two decades and this tenure came under fire recently when Sweetwater resident Walt Fitzpatrick, who has been trying to indict President Barack Obama on various charges, declared Pettway was serving illegally.

After a court case from 1983 showed it had been ruled that a person could serve more than one term as long as a judge reappointed them, Pettway served several more months before Reedy replaced him with Faye Tennyson of Sweetwater.

Grand jury proceedings are kept secret and no one is allowed to comment on what happens in them, but Monroe County Circuit Court Clerk Marty Cook doesn't think Fitzpatrick's arguments from last year had anything do with the change,

"I can't speak for the judge," Cook said, "but it was probably just time for a change. It wasn't a comment on the work anyone was doing."

Grand juries are selected every December and serve for one year, but the foreperson is appointed by the judge and doesn't necessarily have to come from the jury pool.

"The judge can pick the foreperson from wherever they choose," Cook said. "And they serve for two years unlike the other jurors."

There are two grand jury panels chosen in December and they rotate months, meaning each panel only hears six months' worth of cases, though the foreperson oversees each panel.

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