

Oppose New Changes to When People Accused of Crimes Have to Go to Court

Please help prevent the rollback of rights of people accused of misdemeanors. Ask the Washington Supreme Court not to make people go to court for every hearing in their case. Comments are due by February 28, 2022.

For many years, people charged with crimes in Washington had to go to most of the court hearings about their cases. In 2021, that rule changed. Now people charged with crimes can let their lawyers be at hearings instead of them, or they can use the internet to attend court. A group has asked the Supreme Court of Washington to change the rule back to be more like it was before 2021. The changes would let misdemeanor judges make people come to all the hearings in their cases and let misdemeanor judges issue arrest warrants any time a person misses a hearing.

Please ask the Supreme Court of Washington to keep the current rule. Comments can be as short as a few sentences, or they can be longer. **Here are some ideas about what you could say in your comment:**

- If you or someone you know has had to go to court many times for a single misdemeanor case and that was difficult, write about that in your comment. Did having to go to court many times cause problems, including missing work, paying for transportation, finding child care, or other things?
- If you or someone you know has gotten an arrest warrant for missing court on a misdemeanor and that caused problems, write about that in your comment. If police arrested you on the warrant, what problems did that cause? Problems might include missed work, job loss, inability to attend school, and inability to care for children or adults who needed your help.
- Write about why you think people charged with misdemeanors should not have to go to court many times for a single case. Here are some possible reasons:
 - Having to go to court a lot would make it hard for people to go to work or school or care for children or others who need their help.
 - Having to go to court a lot would be hard for people without cars or money for taxis.
 - If people have to go to court a lot, there will be more arrest warrants for missing court.

How to Send a Comment: If possible, say in your comment that it is about CrRLJ 3.3 and 3.4. **Comments are due by February 28, 2022.** Send them to P.O. Box 40929, Olympia, WA 98504-0929, or email them to supreme@courts.wa.gov. Comments sent by e-mail may not be longer than 1500 words.

How to Get More Information: The current rule about when people accused of misdemeanors have to go to court is [Criminal Rule for Courts of Limited Jurisdiction \(CrRLJ\) 3.4](#).

The request to change the rule is at these links:

https://www.courts.wa.gov/court_rules/?fa=court_rules.proposedRuleDisplay&ruleId=5870

https://www.courts.wa.gov/court_rules/?fa=court_rules.proposedRuleDisplay&ruleId=5869

Contact Magda Baker at the Washington Defender Association with questions. magda@defensenet.org