

**Upper Marlboro, MD**  
**District Court Trial Session**  
**September 30, 2022**

This morning two of us went to the District Courtroom 262 where 24 people were charged, a few with more than one case, adding up to 26 cases in all. Of these, 14 were nolle prossed, 7 were continued, 2 bench warrants issued, 2 indictments, and 1 stet. The public defender was Samuel Curry, and the assistant state's attorneys were Elena Ritchie and Joshua Myers. The judge was Katina Self Steuart.

Of the 26 cases that made it this far, 58% were nolle prossed or put on the stet docket and 27% were continued. So, of the 26 cases, 85% were dropped or continued. Somehow, given all the turmoil involved in bringing these cases, this process does not seem "fair, efficient, and effective," as the Maryland Judiciary's motto alleges.

When officers show up for a case, they sign a clipboard with their name and 4-digit number. At the start of the 8:45 hearing, Judge Steuart rattled off a list of 4 digit numbers, asking if these officers were in court. This was the first time I heard a judge do this. Three of the numbers she called out were met with silence. Two of them were reported to be in another courtroom, but one was unaccounted for, so Judge Steuart called the number again, 0231, and said the name attached to that number, Munguia. I saw this name on one of the cases, but the number beside it was 4233, not 0231. The chief from the police office next door was called in but he knew nothing of this officer or number. (I was tempted to show someone my case sheet with the number 4233 beside Munguia's name, but refrained.)

After considerable back and forth and mounting confusion in the courtroom, a light suddenly dawned and a voice in the scrum before the bench said that Officer Munguia may have written "4233" in such a way that it appeared to be "0231." Everyone agreed that that was the case, and Officer Munguia was said to be in room 261, and the morning began.

When the case involving Officer Munguia was called, the loved one, Ms. W, was not present, so Judge Steuart instantly ordered a bench warrant. We were only about 15 minutes into this session which everyone knew would go on for another 15 minutes, at least. But "bench warrant" was the first thing out of Judge Steuart's mouth. Several seconds after the words "bench warrant" hung in the air, a voice behind me said, "she's in the bathroom." Steuart took back her bench warrant and passed the case for a few minutes. In the end, that case, where Ms. W was charged with "threat of mass violence," was continued because the case dated back

to April 29, five months ago, and they still needed to examine the phone records. (“The wheels of justice....”)

Speaking of the wheels of justice, the case of Mr. X was nolle prossed because the alleged incident of assault had occurred on August 18, 2019, over three years ago. The summons in this case was issued on June 27, 2022, and served on August 2, 2022. Mr. X did not appear today, and no defense attorney was entered in the case. ASA Ritchie told the judge that the three-year statute of limitations in this case had expired and it would be nolle prossed. (It was a civilian complaint and the complainant may not have taken action until recently).

From the gallery where we sit, today seemed to be a “quieter” day than usual, although it was not “quiet” for anyone hauled before the court. There were no trials, no guilty pleas, and only one Graham Report officer listed as being an arresting officer in any of these cases.