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James M. Biernat Jr., Chief Judge  
16th Judicial Circuit Court,  
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News



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## *For Immediate Release*

Media Contact: Chief Judge James Biernat (586) 469-5139

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# **Macomb Circuit Court pilots Summary Jury Trials**

The 16th Judicial Circuit Court is spearheading a pilot project offering Summary Jury Trials as an option for civil cases, with a particular emphasis on noncomplex tort, no-fault, and business cases. Summary Jury Trials are one day trials before a six person jury, conducted by a presiding officer who may be the assigned trial judge, a retired judge, or an attorney serving as a special hearing officer. The jury selection process is simplified, time limits are placed on the parties, and the parties are free to modify the rules of evidence. Supreme Court Administrative Order 2015-1 discusses the requirements in greater detail.

All parties must consent to participate in a Summary Jury Trial, and submit a consent order to the trial judge. The parties then select a presiding officer for the Summary Jury Trial. The parties select a date for the summary jury trial, which must be approved by the assigned judge's secretary. If the parties select anyone other than the assigned judge to serve as presiding officer, the parties are responsible for paying his or her compensation. The parties are also responsible for hiring a Court Recorder, if desired, and all clerical responsibilities. A verdict is reached when five of the six jurors agree on a disposition. The nonprevailing party must pay the judgment within 28 days of the jury's verdict. There is no right to appeal the jury's decision, except in case of fraud.

On August 17, 2015, the Macomb County Bar Association presented a "Lunch and Learn" Event to inform bar members about the summary jury trial process. Chief Judge James Biernat attended a panel discussion which included attorneys Richard Hurford, Robert Garvey and Michael Janes. John Nizol, Legal Services Director the the 16th Circuit Court, also participated.

"This process has been successful in other states and we are eager to pilot the program here in Macomb County," stated Chief Judge James Biernat. "We have the necessary protocols in place and are ready to get started."

For more information, please go to:

<http://circuitcourt.macombgov.org/summaryjurytrials>

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