



Darius Pattillo
Henry County District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 15, 2021

DA's Office clears pandemic backlog

MCDONOUGH, GA – The Henry County District Attorney's has worked through all of its pre-indictment pandemic backlog, formally charging more than a thousand of cases with a new safe Grand Jury procedure.

As of March 15, Henry County had indicted 695 felony cases during the COVID-19 pandemic. The office has also accused another 311 cases during the past year.

"It's been exactly a year since the state first shut down from COVID, but during that year we have been working to have as much court as possible as safely as possible," District Attorney Darius Pattillo said. "We are excited that we have been able to reduce all of our backlog of unindicted cases and we are at the point where we are indicting cases as they come in after new arrests."

Pattillo's announcement comes as Georgia Supreme Court Chief Justice Harold D. Melton lifts the suspension of jury trials.

Like other circuits around the state, the Henry County District Attorney's Office halted Grand Jury proceedings in March 2020 when Melton declared a Judicial Emergency.

In November 2020, Pattillo worked with Superior Court Judge Holly Veal and other court stakeholders to launch a new hybrid model of Grand Jury proceedings that involved Grand Jurors being spread throughout multiple secure rooms in the courthouse using iPads and an online platform to hear evidence while still voting in secret to indict cases.

The District Attorney's Office started holding Grand Jury four days a week and then reduced it to twice a week. This month, the office reduced proceedings to once a week – the same schedule as prior to the pandemic – because of the staff's progress.

"The pandemic has necessitated the use of more technology in courts and this was a way for us to be able to still move cases through the system while ensuring we are following social distancing and safety protocols," Pattillo said.

In addition to eliminating the indictment backlog, the District Attorney's Office and Superior Court have continued throughout the pandemic to hold online court, including pleas, bond hearings, probation revocations and other motions hearings.

###

Media contact:

Megan L. Matteucci
Assistant District Attorney and Public Information Officer
Cell: 470-421-9988