

LEGAL TERMS/ABBREVIATIONS

April 1, 1999

Acquit, Acquittal - A finding of not guilty by a judge or jury.

Adjudication - Judgment rendered by the court after a determination of the issues.

Arraignment - Appearance of the defendant in court to enter his/her plea to the charges.

Bail - Cash or surety posted to procure the release of a defendant by insuring his/her future court attendance and compelling him/her to remain in the jurisdiction of the court.

Bench Warrant - Warrant of arrest ordered and signed by a judge (statewide warrant).

Capias - A writ to the sheriff or other authorized agent to arrest the named person (nationwide).

Contempt of Court - An act of disrespect to the court; wilful disregard of the court=s authority.

Continuance - Deferring a trial or hearing to a later date.

Conviction - A judgment of guilty against a criminal defendant.

Dismissed - To dismiss an action or suit without any further consideration or hearing.

Disposition - The sentencing or other final settlement of a case.

Diversion - The process of removing some minor criminal, traffic or juvenile case from the full judicial process, on the condition that the accused undergo some sort of rehabilitation or make restitution for damages.

DOC - The Department of Corrections (State Prison Facility).

Docket - A list of cases to be heard by a court or a log containing brief entries of court proceedings.

Et al - And others or and another.

Expungement - Official and formal erasure of a record or partial contents of a record.

Extradition - Surrender by one state to another of a person accused or convicted of an offense outside its own territory and within territorial jurisdiction of the other, with the other state which is competent to try him/her, demanding his/her surrender.

Felony - A charge more serious than a misdemeanor which may be punishable by more than one year in jail.

Fugitive - A person who flees from one state to another to avoid prosecution.

Grand Jury - A jury of inquiry whose duty is to receive complaints and accusations in criminal cases, hear the evidence adduced on the part of the commonwealth, and find bills of indictment in cases where they are satisfied a trial is justified.

Incarcerate - To confine in jail.

Indictment - A formal charging document issued by a grand jury to the court, that the named person committed a specific offense.

Misdemeanor - Any charge which carries a penalty of no more than one year in jail or a fine up to \$2,500, or both.

No True Bill - A finding by a grand jury that there is no probable cause to decide that a crime has been committed.

Nolle Prosequi/Nol Pros/Nolle Prossed - Commonwealth Attorney declines to prosecute but may still initiate prosecution within one year.

Plea - Defendant=s answer to the charge - guilty, not guilty or nolo contendere.

Preliminary Hearing - Another term for arraignment.

ROR (Release on Own Recognizance) - Release of a prisoner by a judge with no bond requirement.

Show Cause Order - Court order requiring a person to appear and show why some action should not be taken.

Summons - A document signed by a deputy clerk ordering a person to appear before the court.

True Bill - A finding by a grand jury that there is sufficient evidence to warrant a criminal charge.

Warrant - A court order authorizing law enforcement officers to make an arrest or conduct a search.

Withhold Adjudication - The judge withholds a judgment of guilt.

YCA (Youth Corrections Act) - A federal law under which defendants up to the age of 24 may be tried. Person is not required to list a conviction under this law on any type application which asks about arrests.