

Judge Willie Orders First Jury Sequestration

...In Margibi County



Her Honor Ceaineh D. Clinton Johnson, Associate Justice, Supreme Court of Liberia & His Honor Roosevelt Z. Willie, Assigned Circuit Judge, Margibi Court, at the formal opening of the term on Monday, August 10, 2026, in Margibi County

The newly assigned Circuit Judge of the 13th Judicial Circuit Court in Margibi County, His Honor Roosevelt Z. Willie, has taken a landmark step in the interest of the Judiciary by ordering the first sequestered jury in the county's history.

The decision comes as two high-profile criminal cases are set to be heard during the August Term of Court, A.D. 2026.

At the formal opening of the August term on Monday, August 10, 2026, Judge Willie explained that sequestration is necessary to safeguard jurors' impartiality. Citing Section 12 of the Jury Manual, he noted that while sequestration is rare, it is permitted to prevent jurors from being influenced by publicity, persuasion, threats, or bribes.

“The Jury Manual provides under Section 12, titled Miscellaneous (A) for Sequestration of Juror. The purpose of this provision is to avoid accidental or deliberate tainting. Although sequestration is rare, publicity surrounding a trial and interested parties may interfere with jurors’ objectivity; a judge may order that a jury be sequestered to prevent others from tampering with members of the jury through undue persuasion, threats, or bribes,” Judge Willie stated.

One of the two cases to get the jurors' sequestration process is R.L. Vs Toni Obi, Henry Ike, et al., for the crime of Unlicensed possession, distribution, and sale of controlled drugs, Criminal conspiracy, Forgery, Misapplication of entrusted property, Theft of property, and Illicit trafficking.

This particular case was being tried during the last Court Term, that is, the May Term A.D. 2026, but the jurors had to be disqualified because there was evidence of jury tampering.

“We wish to state that these cases cannot be tried without a Jury, especially sequestered Jurors; and in order not to repeat this mistake of Last Term, where the drug case was tried without sequestered jurors and was tampered with; we have had a conversation with both the Jurors Manager and the Court Administrator,” the judge maintained.

Judge Willie disclosed that during his conversation with the judicial officials, he informed both staff responsible that since there is no sequestration room for the 13th Judicial Circuit of Margibi County, the Judiciary must locate a hotel in Kakata and hire caterers for the purpose of sequestering the trial jurors, who are judges of the facts.

He noted that having gotten assurance from the court administrator regarding this request, he has assigned the drug case for Thursday, August 13, 2026, at 9:00 am.