



PRESS RELEASE
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NEW YEAR BRINGS NEW JURY WHEEL TO FEDERAL COURT

What is one of the greatest acts of service United States citizens can give to their country, community, and fellow citizens? The Judges of the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut have an answer: Impartial and enthusiastic service as a federal juror. As part of the Court's juror outreach initiative to educate the general public about the importance of federal jury service, the Court's Jury Committee comprised of judges and Clerk's Office staff has been tasked to oversee new procedures for implementation of the new jury wheel in 2017. The Committee is getting the word out that jurors play an essential role in the American system of justice and qualified citizens from diverse backgrounds are vital to the fair administration of justice.

In the federal court in Connecticut, before prospective jurors are summoned for jury service, their names are randomly drawn, from lists of registered voters and individuals with Connecticut driver's licenses, to receive a questionnaire to determine whether they meet the legal qualifications for jury service. The compilation of names randomly drawn from both lists is the source from which the names of all prospective jurors are drawn. This 2017 master list constitutes approximately two hundred thousand citizens' names.

In the past, questionnaires were mailed and could be completed only on paper. In 2009, the Court implemented eJuror, a web-based program that allows prospective jurors to complete the qualification questionnaire online. Online completion takes about ten minutes, improves accuracy of information, saves time, paper, and money, and streamlines the process. Since 2009, approximately fifteen percent of the Court's qualification questionnaires have been completed online.

Starting in January 2017, prospective jurors will receive a postcard in the mail instructing them to complete the questionnaire online. If a person does not have access

to the internet, the postcard provides instructions for requesting a paper questionnaire. Federal law requires that all individuals randomly selected from the court's master jury wheel complete the questionnaire. There are penalties for noncompliance.

U.S. District Judge Janet Arterton, Chair of the Jury Committee stated: "One of the overarching goals of the Jury Committee is to ensure that a fair cross-section of Connecticut citizens, including racial and ethnic minorities, are represented in federal jury pools in the state. We want all citizens to understand that jury service is an important civic function that supports one of the fundamental rights of citizens -- the right to have their cases heard and decided by a jury of their peers."

After completion of the questionnaire, the names of prospective jurors who are deemed legally qualified to serve are placed in a Qualified Jury Wheel from which the Court randomly selects pools of jurors to be summoned to appear for jury duty. This selection process helps to make sure that jurors represent a cross section of the community, without regard to race, gender, national origin, age, or economic status. United States citizens, 18-years-old and older, may qualify to serve on a jury in the federal court. Information about juror qualification in the federal court in Connecticut can be found in the District of Connecticut Jury Plan located on the Court's website at www.ctd.uscourts.gov/jury-info.

There are two types of juries in the federal court system: grand jury and trial or petit jury. Grand jurors listen to evidence presented by the prosecutor and decide whether there is "probable cause" to believe an individual has committed a crime and should stand trial. If it is determined there is probable cause, an indictment is issued against the defendant. A grand jury consists of sixteen to twenty-three jurors and is not open to the public. Grand jurors generally serve three days a month for a term of eighteen months.

Petit jurors decide the facts in a particular case based on what is presented to them during the trial, while the judge determines the appropriate law to be applied in the case. After hearing the evidence, a petit jury decides whether the Government or the Plaintiff has proven their case. A petit jury consists of twelve jurors in a criminal case and six to twelve in a civil case. The average trial lasts three to five days.

To meet their responsibility, jurors – whether they serve on a grand jury or petit jury -- must not favor the rich or the poor and must be impartial. They must be men and women who will listen to the evidence as presented, follow the judge’s instructions, and make a decision based on the facts presented. Their greatest reward is the knowledge that they have discharged this important civic duty faithfully, honorably, and well.

The Court’s Jury Committee is eager to share information about federal jury service in person anywhere within the state. If you would like a member of the Committee to speak with your group or organization, please contact Dinah Milton Kinney, Chief Deputy Clerk via email at Dinah_MiltonKinney@ctd.uscourts.gov or telephone at (203) 773-2430.

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