

## **Jury Service Information**

### **Why is Jury Service important?**

The United States Constitution and the Texas Constitution guarantees all people, regardless of race, religion, sex, national origin, or economic status, the right to trial by an impartial jury.

### **What is my duty as a Juror?**

As a juror, you must be fair and impartial. Your actions and decisions must be free of any bias or prejudice. Your actions and decisions are the foundation of our judicial system.

### **How was I selected?**

You were selected at random from a list of voter registrations and a list of driver registrations from the county in which you live.

### **Am I eligible?**

#### **Jurors Must:**

- Be a citizen of the United States and a resident of the City of Forest Hill in order to serve as a juror for Municipal Court.
- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Reside in the county of jury service.
- Be able to read and write.
- Be of sound mind.

#### **You Cannot Serve On A Jury If:**

- You have been convicted of a felony or of any type of theft (unless rights have been restored);
- You are now on probation or deferred adjudication for a felony or for any type of theft; or
- You are now under indictment for a felony or are now under criminal charges for any type of theft.
- If you are in doubt, or think you may not be qualified to serve on a jury for one of the above or any other reasons, please notify the Judge.

### **Who can be excused from Jury Service?**

You are entitled to be excused as a juror if you:

- Are over 70 years of age;
- Have legal custody of a child under 10 years of age and jury service would leave the child unsupervised;
- Are a student in class;
- Are the caretaker of a person who is unable to care for themselves (an invalid); or
- Can show a physical or mental impairment or an inability to comprehend or to communicate in English.

### **Municipal Court only hears Criminal Cases**

A criminal case results when a person is accused of committing a crime. You, as a Juror, must decide whether the person charged is guilty or not guilty. The accused person is presumed innocent, and the State, represented by the District or County Attorney, must prove guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt."

### **Will I get paid anything for my time?**

The State of Texas does not require Municipal Courts to pay jurors. However, if you need proof for an employer of your time spent here, we will be happy to sign a Juror Excuse Notice.

### **Must my employer pay me while I am on Jury Duty?**

Your employer is not required to pay you while on jury duty. However, employers are prohibited by law from firing an employee for serving as a Juror. An employee whose employment is terminated in violation of this section is entitled to return to the same employment that was held when summoned for jury service if the employee, as soon as practical after release from jury service, gives the employer actual notice that the employee intends to return. (Civil Practice and Remedies Code, section 122.001).

### **Who Can Have A Jury Trial?**

Any person charged with a criminal offense or any party to a civil case has a right to a jury trial. All parties are equal before the law and each is entitled to the same fair treatment.

### **Are There Rules about Jury Conduct?**

Yes. The Texas Supreme Court has rules to assist you in your conduct as a Juror which will be given to you by the Judge.

### **How Is A Juror Selected For A Particular Case?**

Cases will be heard by juries of 6 jurors. A larger group, called a panel, will be sent to the trial court (courtroom) where the jurors will be questioned under the supervision of the judge.

A juror may be excused from the panel if it is shown that the juror cannot act impartially concerning the case to be heard. In addition, each side is allowed to remove a given number of jurors from the panel without having to show any reason. The trial jury will be the first 6 of the remaining jurors on the panel.

### **What Is Voir Dire Or Questioning Of The Jury Panel?**

It is a way for the parties to select a fair and impartial jury. Under the justice system, you may be questioned by each of the lawyers before they decide to remove a certain number of jurors from the jury panel.

For example, the lawyer may ask you questions to see if you are connected to the trial or if you have any prejudice or bias toward anyone in the trial. These questions are not intended to embarrass you, but rather to help the lawyers in the jury selection process. You may ask the judge to allow you to answer some questions away from the other jurors.

### **What If I Have A Special Need or Emergency?**

After you have been selected as a juror on a trial panel, if you have a special need or an emergency, tell the bailiff.

### **How do we act during a trial?**

A court session begins when the court officer raps for order. Everyone in the court rises. The judge takes his or her place on the bench, and the court officer announces the opening of court. A similar procedure is used when court adjourns. Common courtesy and politeness are safe guides as to the way jurors should act. Of course, you will not be permitted to read newspapers or magazines in the courtroom, nor should you carry on a conversation with another juror in the courtroom during the trial.

You will be treated with consideration and your comfort and convenience will be served whenever possible. If there is an emergency or a matter affecting your service, you should bring it to the attention of the judge. In the event of a personal emergency, notify the judge through any court personnel, or may ask to see the judge privately.

You must give close attention to the testimony. You are sworn to disregard your prejudices and follow the Court's instructions by rendering a verdict according to your best judgment. You should keep an open mind. Human experience shows that, once a person comes to a preliminary conclusion to a set of facts, they hesitate to change their view.

Similarly, jurors should not discuss the case even among themselves until it is finally concluded. Therefore, it is wise for you not even to attempt to make up your mind on the facts of a case until all the evidence has been presented to you, and you have been instructed on the law applicable to the case. Also keep in mind that proper clothing is required. All persons entering the courtroom should be dressed in clothing reasonably befitting the dignity and solemnity of the courtroom proceedings (e.g., shorts, tank-tops, or t-shirts are not permitted).