

## JURY DUTY INFORMATION

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Jury Duty is an important American civic duty and a valuable privilege. This responsibility is one reason our legal justice system is admired and respected all over the world.

You may be randomly selected as a prospective juror by the Geauga County Juror Commission. The selection process is random and utilizes public record information from the County Board of Elections.

If you are selected as a prospective juror, you will receive an instruction letter and a juror questionnaire. The questionnaire is required by state law and provides the court with general information about you. This information is helpful to determine if you are eligible to serve.

If the court determines you are eligible, you will receive a Summons for Jury Duty, and be required to appear at Chardon Municipal Court on a specific date and time. It is important to understand that although you are required by law to appear, you may not be selected to actually serve as a seated juror.

Jury service pays \$25.00 per day. JURY DUTY GENERALLY REQUIRES ONLY ONE DAY OF SERVICE.

TO CONFIRM YOUR APPEARANCE AS A JUROR, PLEASE CALL 440.286.2670, press 5 - AFTER 3:00 P.M. THE DAY BEFORE TO VERIFY IF YOUR APPEARANCE IS REQUIRED. If the trial will be going forward and you must appear, you are required to check in at 8:00 a.m. at 111 Water Street, Chardon, Ohio 44024 (additional public parking is available across the street at 106 Water Street).

Casual business attire is required. You may wish to bring reading material in the event there is a waiting period.

### JURY SELECTION

The first step in a civil criminal jury trial is the selection from the jury panel of the number of jurors required to try the case. Chardon Municipal Court juries are composed of eight (8) persons and one (1) alternate.

After the judge briefly explains the general nature of the case to be tried and introduces the lawyers and parties, the panel of prospective jurors are questioned in a process called voir dire – French for “to speak the truth” – to determine if any juror has a personal interest in the case or a prejudice or bias that may wrongly influence his or her role as a juror. The attorneys may ask the court to excuse some jurors from the trial. These requests for excuses are called “challenges.” There are an unlimited number of challenges for cause, where a specific legal reason is given, and a limited number of peremptory challenges, where no reason is given. The system of challenges is designed to allow lawyers to do their best to assure that their clients will have a fair trial.

For instance, anyone who is related to any of the parties, has unfinished business with one of the lawyers, or knows so much about the case that he or she already has an opinion, may be challenged for cause and excused. On the other hand, a lawyer may learn that a prospective juror has had some experience, such as a similar lawsuit, or a social or business connection with one party, which, although not a legal ground for challenge for cause, may still be a good reason for excusing the juror. This would be a peremptory challenge. A juror should not take offense if excused from serving on a particular jury. The lawyer is not suggesting the juror lacks ability, honesty, or judgment, but is only using a legal right. When all challenges are used, the remaining jurors are sworn to try the case upon the merits.

### THE TRIAL AND WHAT TO EXPECT

Opening Statements – When the juror is selected and sworn, the lawyers on each side of the case may make brief statements to the jury outlining what they intend to prove on behalf of their clients.

Presentation of Evidence – The next step in the trial is the presentation of the evidence in the form of testimony and exhibits. Testimony consists of statements made by witnesses under oath. Exhibits are physical objects, such as photographs, weapons, or written documents.

Rules of evidence have been developed over the years to insure that trials are fair and orderly and the judge acts as a gatekeeper for the evidence that comes into court. Insofar as the jury is concerned, the evidence is only that which the judge permits the jury to consider.

Examination of Witnesses – To prove a certain side of the case, lawyers may call witnesses to the stand for examination. Lawyers ask questions of the witnesses to bring out specific facts they wish to show. The questions asked should have some bearing on the case, and the witnesses should know about the subject matter being discussed.

When the direct examination of a witness is finished, the lawyer for the other side may cross examine, which means that he or she may ask questions of the same witness.

Conference and Delays During Trial – There are occasions during a trial when the lawyers may confer with the judge out of the hearing of the jury, or the judge may excuse the jury from the courtroom while the attorneys argue a point of law. Service as a juror may sometimes require patience.

Closing Arguments or Summations – After all the evidence has been presented, the lawyers for each side will make closing arguments to the jury, giving the reasons why they believe their side should prevail. If the testimony of witnesses is conflicting, the lawyers will tell the jury why the witnesses on their side are more persuasive than those on the other side.

Instructions – After the closing arguments are made, the judge will give instructions to the jury on which questions it is to decide and what specific law applies to that particular case. The kind and amount of proof required will be pointed out. The juror should listen to these instructions very carefully. If, in considering the case in the jury room, there is any disagreement as to what the judge instructed, or its meaning, the jury may ask for further instructions. Such a request should be made in writing and given to the court bailiff who will pass the request on to the judge.

Jury Deliberations – After the judge has delivered the instructions, the jury will go to the jury room to review the evidence according to the judge's instructions and reach a verdict. The verdict is the final decision of the jury; it resolves the case.

The Verdict – When a verdict has been reached, the jury will return to the courtroom. The verdict will be read in open court by the clerk and accepted by the judge. Sometimes one of the parties will ask that the jury be polled. This means the clerk will ask each juror individually in open court if the verdict is his or her own verdict. After the verdict is delivered, the jury's service will be complete, and the jury will be discharged by the judge.

### **JUROR DO'S AND DON'TS**

There are certain rules that a juror should follow throughout the trial in order to be fair to all sides.

Promptness: It is most important that jurors not be late in reporting for duty. The clerk's office should be notified of unavoidable delays.

Discussing the Case: During or before the trial, jurors should not talk about the case with each other, with other persons, or allow other people to talk about it in their presence. If anyone insists upon talking about the case after repeated attempts to silence them, the juror should report the matter to the judge at the first opportunity.

New Accounts: To ensure that jurors keep an open mind until all the evidence, arguments and the instructions of the court have been heard, they should not watch television accounts, listen to radio broadcasts, or read newspaper articles which may occur during the trial. Such sources may give a biased or unbalanced version of the case.

Talking with Parties or Lawyers: Jurors should not talk with any of the parties, witnesses or lawyers during the trial. It may give the appearance that something unfair is happening. Lawyers may avoid jurors, this is normal. Do not take this as being rude or unfriendly.

Personal Problems or Emergencies: Jurors should notify the judge of any problem which may affect service or any personal emergencies which occur during trial. In these situations, a juror may send word to the judge through court personnel or may ask to see the judge in private.