

Why You Are Needed for Jury Duty

A message from the Westmoreland County Court Administration

Exactly when the concept of trial by jury developed is not exactly known, however, one of the origins is the Magna Carta, in which King John on June 15, 1215 granted rights to the citizens of England. One of those rights was a jury of peers, which was viewed as a way to protect citizens from the arbitrary and possibly tyrannical action of government. The concept of trial by jury carried over from England into the colonies, and was adopted as a right both in the United States and Pennsylvania Constitutions.

Today, together with voting, serving as a juror is one of the most important things a citizen can do to protect against tyranny, to guarantee that the justice system remains in the hands of the people, to assure our rights, and to maintain our democracy. The right to a trial by jury is meaningless without the availability of people who serve as jurors.

Consequently, in order to assure the right to have a trial by jury, each citizen has both a right to serve as a juror and an obligation to do so.

The guarantee of trial by jury is the reason you have been called to serve as a juror. When you report for jury duty you will be joining countless numbers of your citizens throughout this country. As a juror, you will have the opportunity to participate in our judicial process by weighing the facts of a case and deciding who is right and who is wrong. That important decision is yours, not the judge's or attorneys'.

Besides exercising your right and fulfilling your obligation to serve as a juror, serving as a juror on a case provides ancillary benefits. You will meet people from other walks of life who may view facts and circumstances differently than you. During deliberations you may gain insights into those different behaviors and points of view. This can be an eye opening experience. In addition, serving on a jury will give you new insight and understanding of your judicial system and how law is enforced and justice achieved.

In conclusion, by reporting for jury duty you will be exercising your right and fulfilling your obligation as a citizen of the United States and as a resident of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. In doing so, you will be doing your part to protect your rights, and to assure that those rights will be available in the future.