

Jefferson Parish JUROR HANDBOOK



24TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

Clerk of Court Jon A. Gegenheimer

Sheriff Joseph P. Lopinto, III

District Attorney Paul D. Connick, Jr.

Coroner Dr. Gerry Cvitanovich

Judge Raymond S. "Ray" Steib, Jr., Division A

Judge R. Christopher Cox, Division B

Judge June Berry Darensburg, Division C

Judge Jacqueline F. Maloney, Division D

Judge Frank A. Brindisi, Division E

Judge Michael P. Mentz, Division F

Judge E. Adrian Adams, Division G

Judge Donald "Chick" Foret, Division H

Judge Nancy A. Miller, Division I

Judge Stephen C. "Steve" Grefer, Division J

Judge Ellen S. Kovach, Division K

Judge Donald A. "Donnie" Rowan, Jr., Division L

Judge Shayna Beevers Morvant, Division M

Judge Stephen D. "Steve" Enright, Jr., Division N

Judge Danyelle F. Taylor, Division O

Judge Lee V. Faulkner, Jr., Division P

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INTRODUCTION

The 24th Judicial District Court welcomes you as a major player in the administration of justice.

The right to a trial by a jury of one's peers is the cornerstone of American justice.

The Court knows that your time is valuable and that you are setting aside many important tasks in order to do your civic duty. We hope that your jury service nonetheless will be an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Before you arrived this morning, we took every possible step to ensure that the cases set for trial during your service are ready to proceed. However, today's crowded dockets sometimes cause unavoidable delay. You may be called upon to wait before being escorted to a courtroom from the jury assembly room. Rest assured that the Court will do everything possible to minimize this problem. We appreciate your patience.

In the jury lounge there are various amenities: television, tables, reading materials, and laptop work stations. The Clerk's Office is pleased to offer complimentary coffee, tea, and water. You may also bring your own snacks into the jury assembly room as well as anything from the building's food court.

HOW JURORS ARE SELECTED

The names of all licensed drivers, state ID card holders, and registered voters in Jefferson Parish are placed into the computer system operated by the Clerk of Court. The names of deceased individuals are removed from lists provided by the Louisiana Bureau of Vital Statistics. These listings are updated once a year for address changes, name additions, and name deletions. The computer runs a comparison to eliminate duplicate names and then selects names at random of those who will be summoned for jury duty.

ARE YOU QUALIFIED?

Louisiana law provides that a person must satisfy certain qualifications to be eligible to serve on a jury. To serve as a juror in Jefferson Parish, a juror:

1. Must be a citizen of the United States and Louisiana, and must have resided in Jefferson Parish for at least one year immediately preceding jury service;
2. Must be at least 18 years old;
3. Must be able to read, write, and speak the English language, and possess a sufficient knowledge of the English language;
4. Must not be under interdiction or incapable of serving as a juror because of a mental or physical infirmity, provided that no person shall be deemed incompetent solely because of the loss of hearing in any degree; and
5. Must not have been under indictment, incarcerated under an order of imprisonment, or on probation or parole for a felony offense within the 5-year period immediately preceding jury service.

If you do not meet all of these requirements, you should notify the Jury Commission immediately in writing (see address, phone, fax, and e-mail information on page 9). If you become aware of your disqualification after you arrive at the courthouse, notify the jury-room personnel at the front desk of your disqualification.

SEQUENCE OF A TRIAL

After reporting to the jury assembly room, you may be assigned to a panel and sent to a courtroom. There, the judge will tell you the names of the litigants, the lawyers who will represent each, and the nature of the case.

You then will be questioned by the attorneys and the judge to ensure that you are qualified and can be impartial. This process is called “voir dire.” If, for some reason (your occupation, your opinion on certain issues, your knowledge of the case, etc.), it might be improper to seat you as a juror, the judge may excuse you from service. This is excusal “for cause.”

Each attorney may, as well, exercise a limited number of “peremptory challenges.” That is, an attorney may request the court to excuse a prospective juror for no apparent reason.

Please do not take any challenge personally. Challenges for cause and peremptory challenges are merely ingredients of trial strategy.

After voir dire, the jury is seated and the trial begins.

To ensure fairness, jurors must follow certain rules. During the trial, you may not discuss the case with other jurors or with any other person, not even members of your family. You should not allow anyone to talk about the case in your presence. Should anyone insist upon discussing the case, tell him that you are a member of the jury and must not hear any comments about it. If he persists in talking, determine his name, if possible, and quickly report the situation to the judge.

The Trial Begins

The plaintiff’s attorney (in civil cases) or the district attorney (in criminal cases) will make an opening statement telling the jury what he/she intends to prove. The attorney for the defense may also make an opening statement. THESE STATEMENTS ARE NOT EVIDENCE, only blueprints of the lawyers’ cases. In arriving at a verdict, you may consider only the testimony and evidence that is introduced during the trial.

After the opening statements, the plaintiff (or the D.A.) will present its case using witnesses' testimony, various documents, or other exhibits. When that party finishes questioning a witness, the defense attorney may cross-examine. There are special rules of law governing what may be asked of a witness, how the witness may respond, and what the jury may properly consider as evidence. From time to time, an attorney may "object" to some testimony or procedure. The judge might ask the lawyers to approach the bench to discuss the matter, or the judge might allow them to debate openly. In either case, the judge will rule on questions of law and evidence and will tell you how the law requires you to treat a particular situation.

The defense then presents its case under the above format.

After both sides have presented their cases, each attorney makes a closing argument.

Like the opening statement, the closing argument is not evidence; and it may not be considered as such. It is simply the summation of the case and the lawyer's claim of what he/she feels he has proved and what the other side has failed to prove.

After the closing arguments, the judge will instruct you as to the law that you will apply to the facts established at trial and what verdicts can be rendered. You and your fellow jurors will then be escorted to the jury room for deliberation.

There, you will select one juror as the foreperson, who will preside over the deliberations and bring the verdict into court.

Don't be afraid to speak out as you and your fellow jurors deliberate. At the same time, respect the opinions of others when they seem reasonable. If your fellow jurors can show you that your viewpoint isn't sound, yield gracefully. But if you honestly believe that your position is stronger, hold firm. The jury concept is based upon the assumption that jurors will arrive at a decision after full and frank discussion and calm, unbiased reasoning.

When you have reached a verdict in accordance with the court's instructions, the foreperson will notify the bailiff. The bailiff will notify the judge, who will make the appropriate arrangements to receive the verdict in open court.

One of the parties may ask, or the Court may order, that the jury be polled, in which case the clerk will ask each juror individually if this is his or her own verdict.

The judge then will thank you for your invaluable service and dismiss you.

EXEMPTIONS

One may choose to claim an exemption from jury duty only if:

1. You have served as a grand or petit juror or in a central jury pool less than two years before the service date on the summons.
2. You are at least 70 years old as of the service date on the summons.

No exemption is automatic. One must assert it by contacting the jury commission by mail, fax, phone, or e-mail. The address and numbers are as follows:

Jury Commission

Post Office Box 10

Gretna LA 70054-0010

Phone: 364-3987 FAX: 364-2623

e-mail: jurycomm@jpcclerkofcourt.us

If a person has failed to claim an exemption before reporting for jury service, he/she may do so in the jury assembly room on the service date, unless he has already been assigned to a jury panel.

EXCUSALS

One may, upon timely written request accompanied by verification of a physician, employer, etc. apply for excusal from jury duty for illness, work situation, etc. Requests based on other hardships must also be made timely and in writing.

Excusal requests must be directed to the jury commission by mail, fax, or e-mail, at the previously mentioned addresses and numbers. Excusal requests may not be made by phone.

The jury commission, if it grants an excusal request, may reschedule service to a later date.

A BIT OF HISTORY

Jefferson Parish Clerks of Court

On the front wall to the right of the television you will see photographs of former clerks of court taking their oaths of office.

In one of them, Jefferson Parish Clerk of Court William M. "Bill" Justice, Jr. is sworn in on June 1, 1956, by retired Clerk of Court Vic A. Pitre.

Born in 1910, Mr. Justice served in World War II in the Army Air Corps. He later became the principal of L.H. Marrero High School. He was first elected as clerk of court in 1956. Mr. Justice retired in 1984 and died in 1988. His seven terms make him the longest-serving clerk of court, surpassing Mr. Pitre, who had served six terms from 1928 to 1952.

In the other photo, Jefferson Parish Clerk of Court William L. "Bill" Klause, Sr., takes the oath of office on June 2, 1952, from 24th Judicial District Court Judge Leo McCune. Klause's wife, Josephine is at his side.

To the left of the television is a collection of photographs, along with their dates of service, of the 19 individuals who have served as clerk of court.

Industries of Louisiana

On the rear wall is a tiled mosaic by master artisan Conrad Alfred Albrizio. Albrizio was born in 1894 and died in 1973. A New York native, he created mosaics and murals for public facilities throughout Louisiana and Alabama. For many years, he was a professor of fine arts at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

This artwork, made of thousands of hand-placed tesserae glass pieces, features Louisiana's diverse industries: education, agriculture, petrochemical, oil and gas, hunting, and fishing.

The mosaic was created in 1957 for the second-floor lobby of the "New" Jefferson Parish Courthouse located at 200 Derbigny Street, Gretna. In 2007, the Jefferson Parish Council and administration contracted with EverGreene Painting Studios, Inc.

of New York City and Braun Construction Co. of Alcoa, Tennessee to perform the delicate restoration and relocation.

History of Law

On the left wall at the rear corner is a canvas reproduction of “History of Law”, a mural by New Orleans native Leonard T. Flettrich (1916-1970). For many years, he taught art at area institutions including Tulane University.

This artwork’s ghostly figures represent the United States’ founding fathers and various disciplines of law: domestic, criminal, civil, etc.

The mural was created in 1957 for the first-floor lobby of the “New” Jefferson Parish Courthouse located at 200 Derbigny Street, Gretna. In 2007, the Jefferson Parish Historical Commission contracted with EverGreene Painting Studios, Inc. of New York City to perform a canvas replication of the mural, which could not be saved prior to the courthouse’s demolition in early 2008. Only the artist’s signature could be salvaged, and it is presented alongside the canvas replica.

Thomas F. Donelon

What is now the Thomas F. Donelon Courthouse served as the annex to the “New” Jefferson Parish Courthouse. The Annex opened in 1969 and originally had only two stories, but three others were added a decade later in the 1970s. It underwent extensive renovations from late 2004 to January 2007. Until 2001, it housed the Louisiana 5th Circuit Court of Appeals and until 2003, it was the home of the 24th JDC District Attorney’s Office.

Thomas F. Donelon was born in 1918 in New Orleans and served in the U.S. Army in the European Theater of Operations in World War II. A Democrat, his political career began in 1958 when he was elected Harahan mayor. He held that position until 1964 when he was elected Jefferson Parish president, the position he held until 1976. Mr. Donelon died in 1977.

The courthouse facility is not the first facility to be named for the beloved parish president. A facility on North Causeway Boulevard in Metairie was named for him until parish offices were relocated to the Joseph S. Yenni Building in the Elmwood

industrial area. The former Donelon building now houses the University of New Orleans' Jefferson Parish campus.

PARKING

The multi-level parking garage at the corner of Derbigny and 3rd streets is intended to serve those arriving at the courthouse complex for jury duty as well as the general public.

Jurors may park in the courthouse complex's multi-level garage at Derbigny and 3rd Streets. To receive **free** parking, write your vehicle's license plate number on your summons and bring it with you — jurors validate parking using the license plate number in the jury assembly room.

Oversized vehicles may park at the rear of the garage facing Dolhonde Street. There are limited spots marked for jurors, and you must place a copy of your summons on the dashboard.

The City of Gretna no longer allows jurors to park at parking meters for free, and on-street parking around the courthouse is restricted.

BE OUR GUEST

We have provided for you...

Free coffee, tea, and spring water, television & magazines, internet access and laptop computer workspace.

Breaks and Lunch

You are allowed brief smoking breaks. You must sign out (and in again upon your return) at the front desk. Smoking is not allowed in the building. However, you need not leave the security of this facility to smoke; a small courtyard, accessible from the snack area of the General Government Building, is available to smokers. You will not need to pass through security to return from that area. If you need directions to the courtyard, please consult one of our deputy clerks.

You will be given a lunch break at a time designated by the judges. There are a number of restaurants within walking distance from the building. Maps of the surrounding streets are available upon request. You may also bring your lunch and enjoy it in the courthouse food court.

Proof of Jury Service

The front desk can provide you with written proof of your jury service. You may need to present it to your employer.

CONCLUSION: A PARTING MESSAGE FROM THE CLERK

For many, jury service is a rewarding experience. But for some, it can be intimidating, frustrating, and even emotionally disturbing. For everyone, this call to duty is an interruption of the normal rhythm of life. It causes inconvenience, disruption of family life and/or work routines, and, sometimes, financial loss.

Despite all of this, I hope that you regard this crucial service to the community as time well spent. The court and I profoundly appreciate your invaluable contribution to the justice system.

Kindest regards and best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon A. Gegenheimer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

JON A. GEGENHEIMER
Jefferson Parish Clerk of Court

*For more detailed information on jury service, please refer to the clerk of court's web site:
www.jpclerkofcourt.us*

This handbook is designed to complement the clerk of court's jury service web site and the video presented in the jury assembly room.