

Jury Service



Jury service is one of the most fundamental rights of Americans as is the right to a trial by jury.

The 6th and 7th Amendments guarantee the right to a jury trial in both criminal and civil cases.

A person is eligible to serve as a juror if they are:

- A U.S. citizen
- 18 years of age or older
- Able to read and understand English

Why is jury service important?

Not just an important part of our criminal justice system, jury service is a pillar of American democracy. To serve as a juror is considered one of the basic duties of a good citizen.

Jury service supports the overall fairness of trials by allowing citizens to participate in democracy and provide their impartial viewpoints on cases.

When are juries used?

- Juries are primarily used in Common Pleas Courts, known as trial courts.
- Even when a jury is permitted, both sides in a case can agree to have the case tried before a judge instead.

Juries in criminal v. civil cases

Criminal

12 members

a jury decides whether a defendant is guilty or not guilty.

In criminal cases, there must be “proof beyond a reasonable doubt” – placing the burden on the prosecutor to convince the jury of a defendant’s guilt.

Civil

eight members

a jury decides whether a defendant is liable or not liable.

The standard of proof is usually based on a “preponderance of the evidence” – meaning the jury weighs the evidence of each side and the party with the weightiest evidence wins the case.

How are juries selected?

A jury is selected from a panel of citizens summoned to the courthouse. With a judge presiding, a prosecutor and a defense lawyer question prospective jurors from the panel until all members of the jury are chosen.

AOPC

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

