

JUROR  
HANDBOOK



State of Maine  
Superior Court  
and  
Unified Criminal Docket

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CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF MAINE

Article I – Declaration of Rights

**Section 6. Rights of persons accused.** In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall have a right to be heard by the accused and counsel to the accused, or either, at the election of the accused;

To demand the nature and cause of the accusation, and have a copy thereof;

To be confronted by the witnesses against the accused;

To have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in favor of the accused;

To have a speedy, public and impartial trial, and, except in trials by martial law or impeachment, by a jury of the vicinity. The accused shall not be compelled to furnish or give evidence against himself or herself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, property or privileges, but by judgment of that person's peers or the law of the land.

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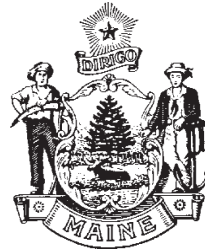
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**Section 19. Right of redress for injuries.**

Every person, for an injury inflicted on the person or the person's reputation, property or immunities, shall have remedy by due course of law; and right and justice shall be administered freely and without sale, completely and without denial, promptly and without delay.

**Section 20. Trial by jury.** In all civil suits, and in all controversies concerning property, the parties shall have a right to a trial by jury, except in cases where it has heretofore been otherwise practiced; the party claiming the right may be heard by himself or herself and with counsel, or either, at the election of the party.



# **JUROR HANDBOOK**

**State of Maine  
Superior Court  
&  
Unified  
Criminal Docket**

Revised June 2009

Supplemental Edition  
Reprinted October 2016

**Published by:  
Administrative Office  
of the Courts**  
1 Court Street  
Augusta, Maine 04330  
207-213-2850  
TTY 711

**NOTE:** This booklet is designed to aid jurors during jury service. It is not part of the court's instructions and should not be used during deliberation in a case.

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## Forward

### **Restrictions on the release of juror information**

Under Maine law, the release of information identifying the names and addresses of jurors is confidential. Any release of that information is governed by Title 14 M.R.S. §§ 1254-A and 1254-B, as well as by Public Information and Confidentiality, Me. Admin. Order JB-05-20 (as amended by A. 1-15)(effective Jan. 14, 2015), and the related Standing Order For Limited Release of Juror Information (as revised Aug. 19, 2014), both of which are available on the court's website.

### **Pre-trial disclosure of juror information**

14 M.R.S. § 1254-A deals with disclosure of juror information, including the questionnaires, before jurors are finally discharged from jury duty. This statute permits disclosure to attorneys for parties or unrepresented parties during the pre-trial stage of the case "at the courthouse for use in the conduct of voir dire examination."

The juror questionnaires may be reviewed by attorneys for parties (their agents and investigators) or by unrepresented parties for voir dire purposes at the clerk's office; however, they will NOT be given a copy of any questionnaire.

Other written juror information given to attorneys for parties (their agents and investigators) or unrepresented parties for voir dire purposes, such as the standard juror list used at the time of jury selection, must be

returned to the clerk's office at the end of the trial.

**Disclosure of information after discharge**

14 M.R.S. § 1254-B restricts the disclosure of juror-related information after the jurors' period of service has expired.

A request for a list of the "finally excused" jurors must be submitted to the Chief Justice of the Superior Court in writing, "accompanied by an affidavit stating the basis for the request." If the request is found to be "in the interest of justice," the clerk's office may be directed to provide a list of the names and addresses of the appropriate jurors.

The law strongly disfavors inquiry into the deliberations of juries (*State v. Watts*, 2006 ME 109 ¶15, 906 A.2d 147). If the court permits inquiries to be made to jurors, the person permitted to make the inquiry must make absolutely clear to the juror that, (a) the juror is not obligated to respond to counsel or answer any questions, (b) the juror is free to discuss his or her own views and participation in the jury deliberations, but (c) the juror should not be asked to comment on the specific participation or remarks by any other juror during the deliberative process.

**NOTE:** Jurors may refuse to respond to any such inquiries. Just because the court permits a person to make inquiries to a juror, there is no obligation on the part of the juror to talk with or communicate in any way with that person.

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## Introduction

You have been selected for service on a trial jury. A **trial jury** — a jury impaneled to try a civil action or criminal prosecution, as distinguished from a grand jury, which reviews evidence submitted by the prosecutor and determines whether a person should be charged with a crime (indictment).

There is no more valuable service citizens can perform than to aid their community by serving as jurors. The principle that a person has a right to be judged by a jury of peers dates back to England in the Middle Ages and is guaranteed by our federal and state constitutions. By serving as a juror you are helping to preserve a fundamental right, to protect that right so it will be a safeguard for all persons, including yourself, should you someday find your property, liberty, or life endangered. Give your service as a juror the same attention that you would like from a juror if you were a party involved in the trial.

Serving on a jury is hard work. The hours are long and the pay is less than you would receive from an employer. There may be periods of waiting and you may become impatient. However, you should not allow such periods to overshadow the importance of your jury service.

The mere presence of a jury, and the knowledge that the trial time is nearing, encourages parties to engage in settlement talks.



Thus, even though a full court day has been scheduled, many or all of the cases may be settled at the courthouse before trial and the jury may be kept waiting. These settlements are of benefit to the parties. Many could not be achieved without the presence of the jury.

The purpose of this booklet is to explain what you will do as a juror. The explanation is intended to help you feel more comfortable and to do a better job. When you are chosen as a juror, the judge will give you instructions that apply in the particular case. This booklet is not meant to and does not take the place of those instructions.

This booklet answers questions a person is likely to ask when first reporting for jury duty. As you read, you will notice certain words are underlined. These words are defined on page 14.

### What kinds of courts are Superior Court and Unified Criminal Docket?

In the United States there are state and federal court systems. The Superior Court and Unified Criminal Docket (UCD) in which you will serve are part of the Maine state court system. The types of cases that can be heard in each court are specified by state and federal laws, which establish the jurisdiction or subject matter that each court system may handle. Superior Court cases are heard by justices, District Court cases are heard by judges, and in the UCD they may be heard by either. We will use the general term judge in this handbook.

Within the federal and state court systems, there are different types of courts, whose jurisdiction is also set by law. The Superior Court is a trial court as distinguished from the Maine Supreme Judicial Court, which is an appellate court. The Maine District Court is a limited jurisdiction trial court in which cases are heard by a judge without a jury.

UCD are dockets where cases which would have been filed in either a Superior or District Court may be heard. UCDs are trial courts and UCD cases may be decided by judges or juries depending upon the nature of the case.

### What types of cases are heard in Superior Court and UCD?

A criminal case involves an accusation that an individual or corporation has committed a crime. The party charged with the crime, called the defendant, is brought before the court by information, a complaint, or an indictment. The plaintiff in the case is the State of Maine, represented by a prosecutor, who may be either from the District Attorney's office or from the Attorney General's office. A defendant under our constitutional system is presumed innocent. In a criminal trial, the State has the burden of proving a defendant's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

A limited number of civil actions, along with criminal cases, may be heard in a Unified Criminal Docket with a jury.

## How are jurors selected?

There are two steps in the jury selection process. The first step is taken when a person's name is placed on a list to be summoned for jury duty. The second step is taken when a person is chosen for jury duty in an individual case.

Jury lists represent a random computer selection of persons living within a given area based upon lists of names supplied by the Department of the Secretary of State Bureau of Motor Vehicles. These lists include the names of licensed Maine drivers, people with Maine ID cards, and people who have asked to be eligible for jury service. Each person selected is sent a questionnaire, which must be completed and returned, and sent a summons, which instructs the prospective juror to report for jury service on a specific date, at a specific time and court location.

People who need to be excused from jury duty must contact the court clerk before reporting to jury duty. The clerk may excuse or postpone service, and in some cases will seek the approval of the judge. A certain minimum number of jurors is required for different proceedings. For this reason, excuses are granted only for serious reasons.

If you have a disability that may restrict your ability to participate as a juror, the Judicial Branch will provide you with reasonable and appropriate accommodations at no cost. Please speak to the clerk if you have any concerns of this

nature. Also, bear in mind that all jurors serve at some degree of economic hardship. For that reason, the court cannot excuse you from jury service merely because you may incur economic difficulty unless the hardship is extreme. For jurors with significant financial hardships, the court can often fashion limited service, which will minimize the impact of service. Again, please speak to the clerk before your date of service if you have any concerns.

When a person reports for jury duty, that person becomes a member of a jury pool. Members of the pool are brought before a judge, who speaks with them about jury service.

Once the judge has instructed the jury, jury selection will begin with the voir dire examination. Generally, voir dire involves questions addressed to the jury by the judge. In some cases, the judge, the attorneys, or both may ask questions of the entire group. In some cases, jurors are questioned individually, while all other jurors remain out of the courtroom.

The purpose of voir dire is to discover if there are reasons why any juror cannot be fair about the case. If you cannot be objective about the case, or if you have a personal interest in it, you should tell the judge at this time. Jurors may be removed by challenge for cause. This means there are reasons why the juror may not be able to be impartial and fair. There is no limit to the number of jurors who may be challenged for cause. A second way a juror may be removed is by peremptory challenge. Each party is allowed a certain number of these challenges, which

require that a juror be excused without explanation. If you are challenged, do not be offended. Each lawyer is trying to help his or her client's case. Being challenged should not be considered as an unfavorable reflection of your character.

In all criminal cases, twelve jurors are selected and impaneled, unless the parties agree to a lesser number. In civil actions, a minimum of eight jurors are selected and impaneled, unless the parties agree to a lesser number. Alternate jurors may be impaneled so that the trial can continue if a member of the regular panel must be excused.

After voir dire, the selected people, who will make up the jury panel, are given the Juror's Solemn Oath. Jurors who do not wish to swear the oath may request to affirm their support of it.

After the oath is sworn, the jury has been impaneled. This means the jury is official. Now the trial will begin.

What are the responsibilities of a juror?

**PLEASE DO NOT BE LATE IN REPORTING FOR JURY DUTY.** Until all jurors are present, the trial cannot proceed.

Once you have been sworn in, you are officially a juror. Your conduct as a juror during the trial is extremely important. A person's freedom or livelihood may be affected by your actions.

The verdict of the jury is to be based solely on the evidence presented in the courtroom. To ensure that the verdict is based on the evidence

presented, that jurors remain impartial and objective and that they receive the same information in a case, certain standards have been set.

- Jurors are allowed to take notes on the trial ONLY upon order of the trial judge.
- Jurors may not ask questions of witnesses.
- Jurors should not talk about the case with anyone, or with other jurors until the case is submitted to the jury for deliberation.
- As the verdict is to be based only on evidence admitted in the case, do not investigate the case on your own.
- Do not read accounts of the trial in the newspaper or listen to them on television or the radio.
- Above all, remain objective and pay strict attention to the testimony given in each case.
- If anyone tries to talk to you about the case, refuse to listen and report the incident to the judge at the earliest possible time.
- The court will instruct you as to any further precautions to be taken in a given case.

### What happens during a trial?

After you have been selected to sit on a jury, the court session will begin each time by the court officer calling for order and announcing the opening of court. Everyone rises and stands until the judge is seated on the bench. When court is adjourned the same procedure

will be followed.

As a juror you will be sitting in the jury box, which will be on one side or the other of the judge's bench. It is likely that a seat will be assigned to you.

**Most trials go through four stages:**

- **Stage 1 — Opening statements** by the lawyers for each side in which they describe to the jury their view as to what is involved in the case. Remember, what the lawyers say is not evidence. It is their own version of what the case is about and what they think the evidence is.
- **Stage 2 — Presentation of evidence** generally consists of word-of-mouth testimony of witnesses, a variety of documents and physical evidence.
- **Stage 3 — Lawyers' closing arguments** to the jury to summarize what they think are the most important and favorable points for their side. Again, their statements are not evidence.
- **Stage 4 — Judge's instructions** to the jury as to the law. The judge will indicate the issues the jury should decide and explain the process of deliberation.

In a case tried before a jury, the jury must decide what happened on the basis of the evidence presented. In this process you will be called upon to determine the credibility of witnesses, to choose between conflicting theories presented, and to decide if enough evidence has been submitted to prove a

particular fact.

The judge is present to inform the jury of the law that applies to the case. This occurs at the end of the trial, but the judge may also rule on questions of law during the trial. As mentioned previously, the jury is to decide the case based only on the evidence admitted. There are certain rules regulating the introduction of evidence that may prevent some evidence from being admitted. When questions arise about these rules and their application, the judge must make a decision on whether or not to let the evidence in. Because the jury should not hear this evidence or the discussion about it, the jury may be excused, the judge may call the attorneys and the court reporter to the side of the bench for a conference, called a "side bar," or the judge, the attorneys, and the reporter may retire to the judge's chambers. All discussion at the side bar conference or in chambers is recorded so that it will be available if the case is appealed. After hearing the arguments of both attorneys, the judge will make a decision on the question presented. This is not a matter for jury deliberation.

These discussions may cause temporary trial delays, but they are necessary and, in the long run, may shorten the total trial process.

After all the evidence has been presented and the attorneys have made their final arguments, the judge will instruct the jury about the law which applies to the particular case being tried. Once the judge has given these instructions, the case is submitted to the jury.



Any jury alternates who have been sitting on the case will be excused at this time. The jury will retire to the jury room to begin its deliberation. Please note that this is the first opportunity for jurors to speak to each other about the facts of the case.

### Responding to questions

From time to time, jurors may be questioned, or asked to comment on a particular case by members of the news media, attorneys, litigants, or other interested parties. If this occurs during the course of the trial or deliberation, you should refuse to discuss the case, as instructed, and inform the judge of the incident as soon as possible. After you have been finally excused as a juror, you may, if you wish, discuss matters heard during your term of service. However, you are not required to do so.

### How are jurors paid?

The State Legislature has authorized the court to pay jurors a fee for each day that they report for jury duty at the courthouse, plus mileage round-trip from home to the courthouse. These rates are set and established by the Legislature, not by the Court, and are subject to change. Parking costs are reimbursed for jurors serving in locations where free parking is not available.

Payments to jurors are processed by the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Requests for juror payments are submitted to the

AOC by each court on a biweekly basis, and checks are then mailed directly to jurors 10 working days after the end of the biweekly period. It may, therefore, be a full 30 days after you serve on a jury before you receive a check in the mail. It is important that you make sure that court records accurately reflect your address.

**You are responsible for keeping records of the money you earn as a juror.** If you have questions, you should seek an opinion from a tax professional; the courts cannot provide tax advice.

### Laws affecting jurors

Maine law governs the rights and responsibilities of jurors. You should be aware of the following provisions:

**Penalties for failure to perform jury service.** A person summoned for jury service who fails to appear or fails to complete jury service will be ordered by the court to appear and to show cause for his or her failure to comply with the summons. A prospective juror who fails to show good cause for not complying with the summons is guilty of contempt, and may be punished by a fine of not more than \$100 or by imprisonment for not more than 3 days, or both (14 M.R.S. § 1217).

**Length of service by jurors.** No juror is required to serve more than once in a five-year period. A juror may be required to serve, or to attend court for prospective service, for up to fifteen court business days, depending on the

court's calendar. Such service could be longer if necessary to complete a particular case.

Service will be extended if necessary to complete service in a particular case. A person will also not be required to serve on more than one grand jury or to serve as both a grand and a trial juror in any five year period (14 M.R.S. § 1216).

**Protection of jurors' employment and health insurance.** The clerk's office will prepare a juror service confirmation letter upon request. An employer may not deprive an employee of employment or health insurance coverage because the employee receives or responds to a summons for jury service or serves as a juror. An employer is also prohibited from threatening or coercing an employee with respect to loss of employment or health insurance coverage. Employers who violate this law are guilty of a class E crime. The affected employee may bring a civil action for recovery of wages or health insurance benefits (14 M.R.S. § 1218).

#### Definition of terms

**appellate court:** A court, which reviews trial court cases on questions of law.

**challenge:** To ask that a member of the jury pool be excused.

**challenge for cause:** To ask that a member of the jury pool be excused, because there appears to be a reason why he or she might not be impartial as a juror.

**civil action:** A civil court proceeding filed by one party against another.

**complaint:** A written charge against a person in a criminal action. A written statement of the plaintiff's claim in a civil action.

**deliberations:** The discussion by the jury through which the verdict in a case is reached. This discussion is private; only members of the jury are allowed to participate or to be present.

**grand jury:** A jury that reviews evidence submitted by the prosecutor and determines whether a person should be charged with a crime.

**impaneled:** A jury, which has been chosen and sworn in a particular case.

**indictment:** The formal charge by a grand jury against an individual or organization.

**information:** The formal charge filed by a prosecuting attorney when a defendant has waived the right to have the defendant's case submitted to the grand jury.

**peremptory challenge:** A lawyer's request that a juror be excused from a case without giving a reason why the juror should be excused. This type of challenge results in automatic removal. The number of challenges depends on the type of case.

**submitted:** When a case is given to the jury for deliberation.

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**trial court:** A court, which is established to resolve disputes between parties by analysis of the evidence presented.

**voir dire:** The French word “voir” means to inspect; “dire” means to talk or speak. It is an examination of jurors to determine whether there are any reasons why they should not be sworn.

### Juror etiquette

**Proper attire is required.** Jurors should dress comfortably for the courtroom, but in a way that does not detract from the dignity of the court. Jurors should dress conservatively. Hats, shorts, uniforms (law enforcement or otherwise), tee-shirts, tank tops, muscle shirts, halter tops, bare midriff clothing, and clothing with slogans or other messages are inappropriate. Please remember that the parties in any case look to the jurors for justice. Their faith in the jury system is more likely to persist if the jurors’ appearance is respectful of the parties and the court.

In accordance with Maine Law, **smoking is prohibited** anywhere in the courthouse, and within 100 feet of the building.

The **use of cell phones is prohibited** in the jury room, as well as in the courtroom.

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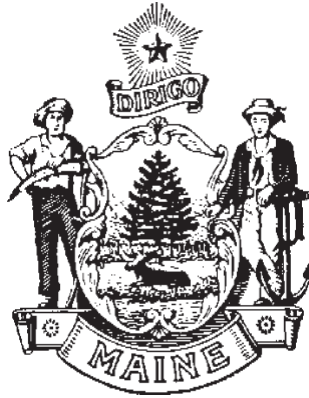
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For more information about being a juror or the Maine Court System, visit: <http://courts.maine.gov>



The State of Maine thanks you for  
your service as a juror.  
You may keep this booklet or return it  
to the Clerk for recycling.



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