

THE A, B, C's of JURY SERVICE

The importance of jury service?

Jury service is one of the most important responsibilities we as citizens have, second only to the right to vote. Trials just will not happen if we do not have enough citizens' show up to be impaneled for a jury. On average the district courts have to pull two to three juries a month in anticipation of civil and criminal trials. Your county needs you to serve! The following are a few commonly asked questions about jury service.

So how are jurors chosen?

The jury wheel, which is the list of potential jurors, comes from two lists: all registered voters in Chambers County and all persons in Chambers County with either a Texas driver's license or a Department of Public Safety identification card. Each year, the Voter lists and DPS lists are merged by matching the names as best as possible to minimize duplications. The merged list is given to the Chambers County District Clerk. Jurors are chosen from our electronic jury wheel on a random basis.

To serve as a juror you must meet qualifications; you must:

- be at least 18 years of age;
- be a citizen of the United States;
- be a resident of this state and a resident of the county in which you are to serve as a juror
- be qualified under the Constitution and laws to vote in the county or city in which you are to serve as a juror (Note: you **DO NOT have to be registered to vote to be a qualified juror**);
- be of sound mind and good moral character;
- be able to read and write the English language;
- not have served as a juror for six days during the preceding three months in the county court or during the preceding six months in the district court;
- not have been convicted of or under indictment or other legal accusation of a misdemeanor theft or any felony.

You may be excused from jury service if:

- you are over 70 years of age; to be permanently excused for age we can send you a request form to complete and mail back to us.
- you have legal custody of a child or children younger than 12 years of age and service on the jury would require leaving the child or children without adequate supervision;
- you are a student at a public or private high school;
- you are enrolled and currently attending college;
- you are an officer or an employee of the senate, the house of representatives, or any department, commission, board, office, or other agency in the legislative branch of state government;
- you are the primary caretaker of a person who is an invalid unable to care for himself or herself. (This exemption does not apply to health care workers);
- you have served as a juror in the county during the 24-month period prior to the date you are required to appear for this summons; or
- you are a member of the United States military forces serving on active duty and deployed to a location away from your home station and out of your county or residence.

Chambers County will accommodate anyone with a medical issue or a disability to help them complete their jury service. However, any juror with a medical issue or disability who wishes to be excused may request so in writing. The request should be accompanied by a letter from their health care provider verifying the medical issue and the need for you to be excused. The request can be sent to the district clerk's office by mailing it to P.O. Box NN, Anahuac, TX 77514, emailing to districtclerk@co.chambers.tx.us, or fax to (409)267-8209.

What do I need to bring to jury service?

We need you to bring your juror summons card with the questionnaire completed, this is used by the attorneys to ask you questions about serving on the jury (formally known as the voir dire process). You might also bring a light jacket or sweater if you get cold because we try to keep it cool due to the number of people in the courtroom.

I'm supposed to call right before I come to the courthouse. Why?

It is the nature of the beast that trials are cancelled, sometimes hours, even minutes before the trial. On every jury summons there is a phone number and website address, two different ways to check and see if the trial has been cancelled. We post the cancellation as soon as we are aware of it so keep checking or call. I suggest you call the minute before you leave the house, we know your time is valuable and we want to save you a trip if we can.

Frequent issues that come up:

The most commonly seen issue are jury summons returned to our office noting the person has moved out of the county or they are deceased. If you have moved, the district clerk's office must receive proof of your new address to change it in the jury system; unfortunately the system will not allow us to simply remove your name. In the instance of a deceased person still receiving notices, we would need a family member to present a death certificate to the tax assessor's office so that they can report this to the DPS office, to have that person permanently removed from the system. You can call the tax assessor's office, 409-267-2740, to get specific instructions for this removal process.

What if I have a planned vacation on the date I am to appear for jury duty?

Just call the office ahead of time, anyone of my trained deputies can discuss the possibility of postponing your jury service for up to 60 days to accommodate your schedule.

I hope this has answered many of your questions about jury service. My deputies or I would be happy to answer any other questions you have just give us a call or email us at districtclerk@co.chambers.tx.us. The district clerk's office realizes the value of your time and we are dedicated to making the jury service process as smooth and convenient as we can for the citizens of Chambers County. The law states it is your duty to serve but we feel it is a privilege to serve your neighbor, you never know when you might need them to serve for you.

Sincerely, Patti L. Henry, Chambers County District Clerk.