

Trial by Jury

Trial by jury, a concept that goes back to English Common Law, is fundamental to the American system of government. It is defined in the U.S. Constitution and the Michigan Constitution. See: US Const, art III, § 2; US Const, Am VI; US Const, Am VII; Const 1963, art I, §14; Const 1963, art I, § 20.

The role of the jury is to make the decision about the facts of the case. The judge makes sure that jurors know the rules and what laws to apply, but the outcome of a case is determined by the jury's vote.

Responsibility of Citizens

Jury service, sometimes called jury duty, is an important responsibility of citizens. Anyone who receives a jury questionnaire and/or summons must respond. Those who do not can be held in contempt of court. The penalty could be a fine or jail. MCL 600.1346.

Students may postpone jury service if it conflicts with their classes. *A student must contact the court to explain the situation and ask for a deferral.*

By state law, jury service for high school students must be delayed by the court until the end of the school year. For full-time college/vocational students who provide proof serving will interfere with class schedules, service must be postponed until the end of the academic year.

Jury Service

For justice to be served, courts depend on fair, impartial jurors to fulfill their civic responsibility. Finding a jury that represents a wide variety of people is important to a case.

To begin, the Secretary of State sends a random list of licensed drivers and people with state IDs to the jury board. Potential jurors receive a questionnaire and jury summons by mail. Those who qualify become part of the jury pool.

On the date they are assigned to serve, members of the jury pool go to court. Before the trial, the judge and lawyers ask individuals about their experiences and attitudes to choose jurors who will be fair. Those who are selected for the panel take an oath. They promise to decide the case fairly.

During the trial, jurors listen to witnesses for both sides and consider the evidence according to the judge's instructions.

Following closing statements, jurors go into a separate room to deliberate. They select a foreperson. This person will lead the discussion. Then the jurors share their thoughts and opinions about what they saw and heard during the trial. Again, they must follow the judge's instructions about what to consider. Finally, they vote on their decision, called a verdict.

Once the jury reaches a verdict, the panel returns to the courtroom. A written verdict is given to the judge, and the foreperson reads the verdict aloud. Individual jurors may be asked whether they agree or disagree.

After hearing the verdict, the judge dismisses the jurors. They are free to return to their daily business.

Juror Qualifications

- Citizen of the United States
- At least 18 years of age
- Able to speak and understand English
- Mentally and physically able
- No felonies
- Resident of the district where called to serve



Jury Orientation Video

<https://mjeducation.mi.gov/videos/jury-orientation-cc>