

Frequently Asked Questions: Jury Service Compliance and Orders to Show Cause

Why is jury service so important to our community and our country?

Jury service is one of the most direct ways community members participate in the justice system. A fair cross-section of our community is critical to ensure that trials are fair and lawful. When jurors participate, cases move forward, delays shorten, and the entire system benefits, saving our tax dollars in the process.

Serving on a jury is a cornerstone of American democracy. It is a chance for everyday citizens to uphold the values of fairness, equality, and justice. By participating, you help protect the rights of others, support the rule of law, and strengthen the community. Your voice and presence matter.

Jury trials are guaranteed by both the United States Constitution and the California Constitution. When jurors do not comply with their summons, trials must be postponed, which affects defendants, victims, families, and the entire community. Ensuring a reliable juror turnout allows the Court to uphold the rule of law, keep cases moving, and honor the constitutional promise of a fair trial.

Why is the Court taking steps to improve juror attendance?

Recently, fewer jurors have been reporting for service, making it difficult for the Court to conduct trials as scheduled. When too few people respond to their jury summons, the Court cannot empanel (form) the juries needed to conduct trials.

Jury service is a constitutional obligation for all US citizens. Legal penalties can result for non-appearance. Unfortunately, the court has had to issue monetary sanctions against citizens who, over the years, disregarded at least four separate jury duty summons and Orders to Show Cause notices for their failure to appear.

Can I be paid for Jury Duty?

Many employers pay you your regular salary to appear or serve on a jury. If your employer does not cover your costs, you can discuss this hardship with the Judge when you appear. Some employers may require proof of your performance of jury duty. You may also go online to download your Certificate of Jury Service [Work Certificates | Superior Court of California | County of Mendocino](#).

If your employer does not pay you for jury duty, the Court pays jurors \$15.00 per day starting on the second day of service. Jurors can also claim mileage reimbursement at \$0.34 per mile or \$12.00 per day for public transportation, also beginning the second day of service.

Note that your employer cannot take any adverse action against you for responding to the summons and serving on a jury. California statutes require eligible adults to comply with jury summons. California Labor Code section 230 addresses an employer's obligation to allow an employee to take time off to perform jury service. This law states, "An employer shall not discharge or in any manner discriminate against an employee for taking time off to serve as required by law on an inquest jury or trial jury, if the employee, prior to taking the time off, gives reasonable notice to the employer that the employee is required to serve."

Moreover, California Code of Civil Procedure section 204 states, "No eligible person shall be exempt from service as a trial juror by reason of occupation, economic status, or any characteristic listed or defined in Section 11135 of the Government Code, or for any other reason."

How does this affect our broader community? What are the financial costs?

Without enough jurors, taxpayers are forced to cover additional costs of postponing trials and litigants are made to wait for their outcome.

When trials are delayed due to an insufficient number of jurors, many costs increase:

- Attorney and staff time continues to be spent even though the trial cannot begin.
- Some witnesses receive statutory fees and mileage reimbursement for appearing, even when the case is postponed.
- Interpreters, once scheduled, must still be compensated.
- Court security and court staff are not utilized effectively.
- Administrative staff must reschedule hearings, notify parties and witnesses, and summon additional jurors for a new date.

These costs directly impact law enforcement resources and stretch the Court's staffing and budget.

To address this chronic issue, the Court has begun issuing **Orders to Show Cause** (OSCs) notices to individuals who have received multiple summonses but have not responded.

What is an Order to Show Cause?

An Order to Show Cause (OSC) is a formal notice requiring a person to appear in court and explain why they did not respond to earlier jury summonses. It is not a criminal charge. It is

an order to speak directly with the Judge, clarify their reason for disregarding the summons, and resolve the matter fairly. OSCs are issued only after not responding to four jury summons.

I received an OSC. What should I do?

Please appear on the date and time listed on your Order. This is your chance to explain what happened and provide any relevant information or documentation. The Court/ Judge understands that emergencies and misunderstandings occur and considers each situation individually. **DO NOT DISREGARD THIS IMPORTANT NOTICE.**

Can I resolve the matter without appearing?

In some situations, the Jury Office may be able to assist you ahead of the hearing. Please follow the instructions printed on your OSC. Unless the Court specifically excuses you, you must appear in person.

What happens if I ignore an OSC?

Failing to appear will result in fines or other sanctions. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Jury Office as soon as possible so we can help guide you.

What if I had a valid reason for missing jury service?

You will have the opportunity to explain your circumstances at the OSC hearing. Factors such as illness, lack of notice, or genuine hardship can be addressed with the Court.

How do I avoid receiving an OSC in the future?

Responding promptly to your jury summons is the simplest way to stay in compliance. Even if you believe you are not eligible or cannot serve, completing the questionnaire allows the Court to update its records and consider your situation appropriately.

Who can I contact if I have questions?

For assistance, please contact the Court's Jury Services Office either in person or by email at juryservices@mendocino.courts.ca.gov. We are here to answer questions and help you understand your rights and responsibilities as a potential juror.

Second US President John Adams

Quote: “Representative government and trial by jury are the heart and lungs of liberty.”

Context: Adams expressed this view repeatedly throughout his legal and political career, including in correspondence and public writings defending the right to trial by jury. This quote reflects his lifelong belief — shaped by his experiences as a lawyer during the colonial era — that juries were essential to preventing oppression. Having lived through intense conflicts over British attempts to restrict jury trials, Adams saw citizen juries as one of the central foundations of American freedom and self-government.

Chief Justice Earl Warren (born in Los Angeles County, CA)

Quote: “The jury has been the conscience of the community for centuries.”

Context: Earl Warren, former Governor of California and later Chief Justice of the United States, often spoke about the democratic function of juries. This statement reflects his belief that juries serve as a vital link between the justice system and the public’s sense of fairness, ensuring that community values inform the administration of justice.

President Ronald Reagan (longtime California resident and former Governor of California)

Quote: “The jury is a cornerstone of our system of justice.”

Context: Reagan made this remark while speaking about civic participation and the responsibilities of citizenship during his time as Governor. He emphasized that serving on a jury is part of sustaining the rule of law and protecting individual rights in a free society.