



## Superior Court of California County of Riverside

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### **NEWS For Immediate Release**

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### **Court Adopts New Policy to Reduce Jury Panel Size**

**Riverside County:** The Riverside County Superior Court recently adopted a policy that is designed to reduce the waste, cost, and inconvenience of calling in too many jurors for jury duty. The court's goal in implementing its new Juror Summoning and Utilization Policy is to fully utilize those citizens summoned for jury duty, minimize the length of service for jurors, provide adequate jurors to courtrooms in a timely manner, and manage juror service in an efficient, fair and cost effective manner.

In the spring of 2005, the court's Jury Committee began researching the subject of juror panel size reduction. The committee determined that while the court has consistently called in fewer jurors since the implementation of the "One Day, One Trial" system, there were still many prospective jurors being sent home or to work without being utilized, as many as 18,000 a year.

Under the new policy, the number of jurors called each day will be based on an optimum range developed from analysis of juror statistics, input from judicial officers, and review of other trial courts' jury panel size reduction programs. Instead of developing one set number of jurors to be called for each case, without regard to the

case type, length of trial or other unique factors, the range allows a trial judge the flexibility of ordering a panel either at the lower or higher end of the range, as the case requires. Additionally, in keeping with the “One Day, One Trial” policy, jurors excused from one department will be returned to jury assembly for possible use in other departments on their first day of service, but will not be asked to report on a second day unless they are sitting in a trial department for jury selection. The recycling of jurors makes full use of prospective jurors and allows the court to operate with fewer summoned jurors. Judge Dallas Holmes, who chairs the court’s Jury Committee, stated, “We don’t want to waste people’s time and this new policy should help.”

Recent studies of jury operations suggest that people are most satisfied with jury duty when they are able to participate more fully. Those who participate in voir dire, the preliminary examination that the court and attorneys make of prospective jurors, or those who are sworn as trial jurors tend to have the highest level of satisfaction. Presiding Judge Sharon Waters, echoing that philosophy, commented, “The new policy will promote public confidence and increase juror satisfaction by increasing the likelihood that those summoned will actually participate in the jury selection process.”

In the coming months, the court will be closely monitoring the impact of the new policy. The Jury Committee will be reviewing monthly trial statistics, specifically as they relate to jury panel size, and will be looking at how often supplemental panels are required or how often a trial judge must exceed the specified range to impanel a jury. Additionally, the court’s Executive Committee will be reviewing jury statistics each month to determine the effectiveness of the policy.

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