

Minutes of Citizens Advisory Committee on Jury Selection
Friday, May 21, 2010
Jennifer Putman Meeting Room, Brookens Administrative Center
1776 E. Washington Street, Urbana, IL

Call to Order: Chair Aaron Ammons called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

Roll Call: Seven members appointed from the General Public were present: Aaron Ammons, Patricia Avery, Bill Brown, Brian Dolinar, Jennifer Putman, Patrick Thompson (arrived at 6:15 pm), Ken Turner. Three members appointed from the General Public were absent: Lorraine Cowart, Barbara Kessel, Joan Miller. Two Elected Officials were present: County Board Chair C. Pius Weibel, Justice & Social Services Committee Chair Matt Gladney. Two Court Officials were present: Judge Thomas Difanis, Court Administrator Roger Holland. One Court Official was absent: Public Defender Randy Rosenbaum.

Approval of Agenda, Minutes (March 19 and April 23, 2010): The agenda was approved as amended. Minutes from the March and April meetings were not available.

Announcements/Communications: Putman reported on Steve Beckett's presentation to the Champaign County League of Women Voters at the group's May 13 annual meeting. The "Jury Diversity: It's More than Numbers" talk was based on Prof. Beckett's presentation to the annual educational conference for Illinois judges, and urged judges to keep juror data refreshed by means of an annual "redraw" of prospective jurors' names; recommended use of a voluntary survey by which jurors could self-identify their racial background (preferable to relying on Court Watchers' personal impressions of jurors' race); and recommended adding to the lists used to compile names of prospective jurors—including, for example, various lists maintained by the Department of Labor. Administrator Holland responded that (1) juror data in Champaign County are refreshed by annually updating the "wheel" and (2) a voluntary racial self-identification survey is a new feature of the revised Juror Qualification Questionnaire that will launch this summer. Putman provided copies of print material Beckett presented to the LWV, including a news clipping about Kankakee County Chief Judge Erickson's decision to fine citizens who fail to appear for jury duty, and a "visual aid/public service message" copyrighted by the State Bar of California that depicts 12 dogs "seated" in a jury box behind a "defendant" who is a cat, beneath the headline "A Jury of My Peers?" Putman also reported Beckett's announcement of a delay in publication of this year's Courtwatching report while statistical analysis is sought—perhaps by the University of Illinois Survey Research Lab. Ammons announced that Judge Difanis will be his guest on the Higher Ground program this Saturday morning, May 22 on radio station WEFT. The two will discuss the work of CACJS and proposed use of drug forfeiture proceeds to increase juror stipends. Avery introduced members of the public Karen Simms, sponsor of the Peer Ambassador youth group, and Peer Ambassadors Claire Kirk-Cape, Athena Hollins, and Lyric Simms. Holland announced that June 1 is the current launch date for the revised Juror Qualification Questionnaire. Patrick Thompson graduated from Eastern Illinois University with a degree in Career and Organizational Studies.

Sharing PSAs (Discussion and Editing): Among discussion points offered by members of the public and the committee were these: (1) CACJS can produce more than one PSA, intended for more than one audience; (2) Rather than try to produce a “perfect” PSA in the near future, CACJS should try to produce a “merely good” PSA now; (3) If CACJS produces more than one PSA, they can be tied together by repetition of a tag line common to all; (4) The PSA should use voices that sound like the target audience, keeping in mind the multiple voices within the African-American community; (5) Humor could be a component of a compelling PSA. Four scripts were shared, including Claire Kirk-Cape’s “rap-style” work called “Represent” [Represent. / You got a voice. / So make the right choice. / Return the questionnaire. / You can help to keep it fair. / Return the questionnaire.]; two different PSAs submitted by Bill Brown; and the script Patrick Thompson first presented in February. Appreciation was unanimous for all scripts. The Thompson script will be the first to be taped. Avery and Holland offered to research the availability of studio time at stations WDWS, WILL, and WEFT, and at the Independent Media Center.

Creation of Pamphlet about Jury Service: Holland distributed copies of a seven-point paper titled “FAQs Regarding Employment and Jury Duty,” which could be the basis of educational material the CACJS may produce in the future.

Legislation to Increase Jury Stipend: Judge Difanis briefed members on a proposal to devote some portion of the proceeds from drug seizures and forfeitures to higher stipends for jurors. Such legislation would be introduced in a future session of the state legislature.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be Friday, June 18.

Adjournment: Chair Ammons adjourned the meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Putman
Recording Secretary