

Minutes of Citizens Advisory Committee on Jury Selection
Friday, July 10, 2009
Brookens Administrative Center, Jennifer K. Putman Meeting Room
1776 E. Washington St., Urbana, Illinois

Call to Order: Chair Ammons called the meeting to order at 5:35 pm.

Roll Call: Five members appointed from the general public were present: Aaron Ammons, Brian Dolinar, Barbara Kessel, Joan Miller, Jennifer Putman. Five members appointed from the general public were absent: Tricia Avery, Bill Brown, Lorraine Cowart, Patrick Thompson, Ken Turner. Three Court or Elected Officials were present: Judge Thomas Difanis, Courts Administrator Roger Holland, County Board Chair Pius Weibel. Two Court or Elected Officials were absent: Justice & Social Services Committee Chair Matt Gladney, Public Defender Randy Rosenbaum.

Approval of Agenda: The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the June 19, 2009 meeting were approved as circulated.

Announcements and Communications: Judge Difanis commented on the cost-saving motivation for his decision to eliminate ten weeks from the annual jury term, effective January 2010; Joan Miller provided her new mailing address; members thanked Administrator Roger Holland for providing the past five years' addresses to which summonses have been sent.

Public Participation: Carol Ammons, District 5 County Board Member, urged the CACJS to make periodic reports to the Justice and Social Services Committee, and to the full County Board. Ammons stated she is in the process of responding to the Jury Qualification Questionnaire recently mailed to her home.

Discuss/Review Past Five Years' Addresses Where Summonses Sent: Putman offered to inform Professors Beckett and Gunsalus, who have proposed a study of how summons addresses may correlate with Census tracts, that the CACJS now possesses the raw data (January 2005 through June 2009) needed to conduct such a study. The CACJS hopes to not duplicate preliminary research steps that the law faculty have already taken. Some members acknowledged their inability to make useful sense of the data in their current, 1800-page format. The CACJS will rely on the statistical expertise of individual members to shape analysis of the data. Consensus was to continue this discussion (Discuss/Review Past Five Years' Addresses) at the July 24 meeting.

Other Business: Members revisited subjects discussed at previous meetings, and agreed on the following:

- Judge Difanis will write a letter, to be enclosed with the Juror Qualification Questionnaire, that thanks prospective jurors for their time in completing the questionnaire and for their time in service as jurors, should they be summoned.
- Judge Difanis will revise and amend some of the questions on the Juror Qualification Questionnaire (adopted from Peoria County). Some of the questions (e.g., Ques. 12, "Are you or a family member on probation or parole?") could be deleted; some questions (e.g., Ques. 10, "Are you or a family member charged with a criminal offense?" and Ques. 11,

“Have you or a family member been convicted of a criminal offense?”) could be combined; and some questions (e.g., Ques. 9, “Are you a party to a lawsuit pending in this county?”) will be retained. Some CACJS members expressed concern that retaining items 8 through 13 on the printed questionnaire will deter a percentage of prospective jurors from completing the form. These members suggest waiting until the first day of jury duty, after jurors have viewed the orientation video, to obtain answers to Questions 8 through 13.

- Judge Difanis and Administrator Holland stressed that, of the two mailings sent to prospective jurors (the Jury Qualification Questionnaire and the Summons) the first focus of the CACJS should be on improving the wording and distribution of the Questionnaire, because the list of persons who receive a Summons is generated from the list of persons who respond to the Questionnaire.
- Ammons asked what funding the County Board could provide to support programs of the CACJS. Chair Weibel was skeptical that the county could allocate any financial resources. Instead, members agreed to turn to such community groups as the League of Women Voters, the Champaign County chapter of the ACLU, and the local bar association for monetary contributions (as needs arise).
- Judge Difanis volunteered to approach the bar association for help in underwriting the expense of an ad to be aired on WBCP Radio. Ammons will obtain the station's prices for air time, and will prepare copy for appropriate ad manuscript.
- Ammons offered to work on development of "consciousness rap" suitable for airing as a public service announcement.
- Administrator Holland will provide cites of the statutes that specify how lists of prospective jurors are to be composed. If statutes require use of only County Clerks' lists of registered voters and the Secretary of State's lists of licensed drivers and persons possessing state I.D. cards, then the CACJS will encourage state lawmakers to amend these statutes to allow lists of prospective jurors to be supplemented by additional names (e.g., names of persons whose phone numbers are published in a telephone directory, names of persons who file income tax returns, names of persons who claim unemployment insurance or Medicaid benefits).
- Administrator Holland is unable to attend the July 24 meeting, so the conference call to Paula Hannaford-Agor, National Center for Jury Studies, has been postponed to a date when it will be convenient and practical for him to facilitate the call.

Schedule Next Meeting: The next meeting is Friday, July 24 (5:30 pm, Putman Meeting Room).

Adjournment: Chair Ammons adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jennifer Putman
CACJS Recording Secretary