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**AN EXAMINATION OF JUROR ATTITUDES AND FAILURE TO APPEAR  
PATTERNS IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF JACKSON COUNTY, MISSOURI:  
AN EFFORT TO DETERMINE ACTIONABLE  
REMEDIAL ALTERNATIVES**

A fundamental U.S. Constitutional right is the right to a jury trial, which is guaranteed by the Sixth and Seventh Amendments to the United States Constitution. Courts around the country, through the use of a court-ordered summons, compel this civic duty from our citizens to provide this constitutional right. Even so, citizens routinely decide to ignore their duty to perform jury service and disregard the summons they receive from the courts.

The Circuit Court of Jackson County, Missouri remains vigilant in the quest to reduce the number of jurors who fail to report for jury service. The Jury Supervisor was asked to review the necessary data and make recommendations for remedial actions tailored to reduce the Court's failure to appear rate. The Jury Supervisor determined that it would be necessary to learn whether the current follow-up practices were effective and then examine why some individuals fail to report for duty, willfully violating a lawful court order. With results from this analysis, an examination of potential remedial efforts could be reviewed. The goal would be to implement changes that would decrease the Court's failure to appear rate.

A three-step approach was taken to assess the court's current failure to appear status. First an analysis of the current failure to appear rate was conducted, using reports

available from the court's jury computer software. Next an analysis of the effect of the second notices that are sent to non-responding jurors was conducted. This included individual interviews with citizens who reported for jury service in response to the second notice. Finally, a juror questionnaire form was developed and distributed to jurors reporting to the Kansas City courthouse location. The purpose of this survey was to provide insight into the citizen's opinion about jury service and his attitude toward those persons who do not respond.

The research methodology used involved interviewing jurors, both in person and through written questionnaires and telephone surveys. Jurors responding for service as a result of receiving a second jury summons were interviewed in an effort to discern why they did not respond to the original summons. Large numbers of reporting jurors were asked to voluntarily complete a three-page juror questionnaire form. The form elicited their opinions of jury service, as well as information about practical problems associated with jury service, their experience with service, and biographical data.

Citizens serving in Jackson County feel they are underpaid and not efficiently utilized. They are not provided parking, and facilities that are provided for them are inadequate. Jurors are ambivalent on the question of punishing their fellow citizens who fail to appear for service. 29% were neutral on the proposition. 42% were in favor of some type of punishment being visited upon those failing to appear, and 29% were negative toward the idea.

On an average week approximately 14% of those jurors receiving a summons do not respond in any way. When these individuals receive a second notice to report for service about half are located. Of these, about half eventually serve. Efforts to find the

remaining non-responders proved difficult. Most could not be located. Those that could had various reasons, many valid, as to why they could not serve. Those that did respond to the second notice when asked often claimed that the first notice was never received or had some other reasonable explanation.

The research that was conducted convinced the Jury Supervisor of the following.

- 1) Current court efforts to curb juror no-shows were effective.
- 2) The court has a problem with undeliverable summons that should be addressed at a separate time.
- 3) Juror attitudes about service indicate that citizens in Jackson County may likely be more amenable to “community friendly” efforts to increase juror yield such as increased educational awareness of the nature and importance of jury service and more flexibility with regard to postponements of service.

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This [research paper](#) is available in its entirety in portable document format. To access, you must first obtain and install the Adobe Acrobat Reader.



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