



The Judicial Branch and Legal System: SS.7.CG.2.5
Juries and Trials
READING #1

Name: _____

Date: _____



SS.7.CG.2.5 Benchmark Clarification 1: Students will examine the significance of juries in the American legal system.

Jury service is one of the most important civic duties one can perform. Jury service allows U.S. citizens to participate in the judicial process. Citizens serve on a jury to ensure that their peers receive the right to a fair trial with an **impartial** jury.

Jurors are expected to listen to the facts of the **case** and review the evidence presented in court. Then they deliberate (discuss the case) to make a decision about the case. The U.S. Constitution protects the right of every citizen to have a trial by jury in criminal cases. A **jury** is a group of qualified citizens who are selected to decide facts and provide a **verdict** for a trial. Juries are needed for trials at the state and federal levels. There are two types of juries in the United States: grand juries and petit or trial juries.

Jurors play a significant role in our legal system. They are so important, they are even considered officers of the court! Protecting our rights and liberties, and ensuring the principles of rule of law are upheld, requires both a **judge** and jury. By having both work together, it serves as a protection against tyranny. The judge is in charge of any issues related to application or interpretation of a law, while the jury is the “finder of facts”. Listening to facts of a case in order to decide guilt or innocence is the ultimate obligation of citizenship.

Jurors must show integrity, listen fairly to all evidence presented, and make decisions completely based on the law. Jurors take an oath to be honest and take their duty seriously. Jury trials are an important component to maintaining law and order in our constitutional republic.

Jurors are needed for a variety of cases. Jurors may help decide if there is enough evidence in a case to charge someone with a crime, decide guilt or innocence of a crime, or help determine a solution to a private, or civil, matter. It is a great reward for citizens to be able to participate in the administration of justice directly.

Juries play an important role in protecting the life, liberty, property, and happiness of all citizens.

case - a matter that goes before a judge or court of law

impartial juries - a group of citizens sworn to give a fair verdict according to the evidence presented in a court of law

judge - a public official who decides questions brought before a court

juror - a member of the jury

jury - a group of qualified citizens who are selected to decide facts and provide a verdict for a trial.

Sources:

Learn about jury service. United States Courts. (2012). Retrieved November 16, 2022, from <https://www.uscourts.gov/services-forms/jury-service/learn-about-jury-service>

United States Government. (2012). *Handbook for trial jurors serving in the United States - United States Courts.* United States Courts. Retrieved November 16, 2022, from <https://www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/trial-handbook.pdf>