



## **Citizens Jury Project Report March 2010**

### **Summary**

In March of 2010, the Citizens Jury Project (CJP) of the Fund for Modern Courts operated Ombudservice booths in eight (8)<sup>1</sup> courthouse locations in New York City for six to twelve hours per week.<sup>2</sup> The primary goal of CJP interns is to provide assistance to jurors and improve the juror experience. In March, 522 jurors approached the booths (or used the virtual ombudservice online), with 544 questions or comments.

This report identifies common questions asked and comments made to interns at each site. Inquiries about the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse were the most common juror questions at seven (7) CJP sites in March 2010.<sup>3</sup> At one (1) site, the greatest number of questions concerned procedure.<sup>4</sup>

### **New York County**

**60 Centre Street:** During March, the CJP Ombudservice booth was approached by 58 jurors with 60 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (37). Nine (9) questions were asked about procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Eight (8) questions were in regard to qualifications to serve, and four (4) late jurors approached interns.

**100 Centre Street:** During March, 33 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 36 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (26). Four (4) questions were asked about procedure and what jurors could/were required to do.

**111 Centre Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor:** During March, 54 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 57 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (40). Six (6) questions were asked in regard to postponement or difficulty in serving. Three (3) late jurors approached interns with questions. One juror said that, “The clerks have a good sense of humor and the courthouse is really clean.” Another juror suggested that, “Only those who want to serve should be here.”

**111 Centre Street, 11<sup>th</sup> floor:** During March, 162 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 167 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (111). Twenty (20) questions concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do, and eight (8) were in regard to postponement or difficulty in serving. Seven (7) late jurors approached interns with questions. Juror suggestions included:

- *[T]hey should have coffee stand on this floor, instead of [having to] com[e] through security again.*
- *People that are sick shouldn't be serving jury duty. I don't want to sit by them and get sick. Is there anything thing that can be done?*
- *We need coat hooks behind the bathroom stalls.*
- *I think we should only be called every 10 years.*

### **Kings County**

**320 Jay Street:** During March, 23 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth and raised 24 questions and comments. The questions most frequently asked concerned procedure and what jurors could/were required to do (9). Five (5) questions had to do with postponements or difficulty serving, and three (3) concerned qualifications to serve. One juror complained that, "The item didn't come out and the [vending] machine took my money."

**360 Adams Street:** During March, 68 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 72 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (42). Sixteen (16) questions were asked about procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Six (6) late jurors approached interns.

### **Bronx County**

**215 East 161st Street:** During March, 97 jurors approached the CJP Ombudservice booth with 99 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (62). Eighteen (18) questions were asked regarding procedure and what jurors could/were required to do. Nine (9) questions concerned postponements and difficulty in serving. Five (5) questions were related to qualifications to serve.

### **Queens County**

**Kew Gardens:**<sup>5</sup> During March, 24 jurors approached interns with 25 questions and comments. The most common questions concerned the location of particular places and/or amenities/facilities inside and outside of the courthouse (14). Four (4) questions were in regard to procedure and what jurors could/were required to do, and three (3) about the computers. One juror complained that, "For those who do not wish to watch TV while waiting there is no quiet place to read or work."

## Virtual Ombudservice Comment

One juror commented that,

*In the first video shown, the mention of religion is there in the line “about 400 years before the birth of...” This can be offensive to those who do not believe in... Especially by the fact that it was not necessary to mention, just say "x" amount of years ago.*

### Comments on CJP

Jurors said,

- *You were extremely helpful. Thank you.*
- *I really appreciate organizations such as CJP for making jury process more organized and less of a hassle. Thank you so much. Your service is appreciated.*

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<sup>1</sup> CJP’s “Mineola intern” left CJP at the end of February for a full-time opportunity. A suitable replacement was hired, and began working in Mineola in April.

<sup>2</sup> While booths are generally in operation from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, three days per week, there are exceptions. In the Bronx, jurors are called twice each week, and so the booth there is operated two days per week. In Brooklyn, interns arrive after the court’s orientation (as requested by court personnel). Interns work until lunch time, when most or all jurors leave the courthouse. Lunchtime varies, but often begins before 1 p.m. Additionally, interns occasionally report that jurors have been discharged early, meaning, of course, that there is no one left to approach them.

<sup>3</sup> Examples of questions about location include: “Where can I get lunch/coffee/a newspaper?”; “Where are the restrooms/water fountains/elevators?”; and “Where is the subway/post office?”

<sup>4</sup> Generally, such questions include “Can I leave? Is there a sign-out sheet?”; “When is lunch?”; “Can I use my cell phone/smoke/eat here?”; “How long does jury service last?”; and “Will I get something proving I served?”

<sup>5</sup> During one week of March, jurors were not called to Kew Gardens.