



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Commission of the Jury<sup>1</sup> was formed in the spring of this year, and is charged with finding ways to improve juror utilization in New York, an issue that cuts across many levels of analysis. The first part of Citizens Jury Project Summer 2003 report focuses on an issue underlying juror utilization, the inclusion of individuals into the system. The report discusses how the design of the system and the court process can promote or inhibit participation, and provides recommendations based on this analysis and informed by our advocacy for jurors in New York courts.

The second part of the Summer 2003 report provides a detailed analysis of 949 comments collected from jurors interviewed during the time period of April 1, 2003 to July 31, 2003. Accompanying this analysis are recommendations that have been informed by jurors' comments and our ongoing presence at 60, 100, and 111 Centre Street courthouses in Manhattan, and 360 Adams Street in Brooklyn.

<sup>1</sup> This twenty-eight member commission is comprised of judges, defense attorneys, prosecutors, civil litigators and jury commissioners from across the state, and is chaired by Marc C. Zauderer. For more information visit: <http://www.jurycommission.com/>

## RECOMENDATIONS

**Assess the diversity of jurors present in the assembly rooms and called to panels, and continue to devise and implement ways to promote inclusion.**

- Collect data and analyze how well the diverse communities of New York are represented in the jury pool and panels.
- Expand research and analysis to include the non-compliant and disqualified populations, and the response to and representation of caretakers in the system.
- Reconsider implementing affirmative measures to promote juror participation in New York.
- Provide greater access to information about jury service to the general public and to jurors while they serve.
- Reconsider the possibility of offering child care reimbursement to jurors.

**Provide jurors with detailed information about where to report during all phases of service, and provide more procedural information throughout the process.**

In order to alleviate juror confusion during the voir dire process or while serving on a panel, New York and Kings County courts must provide explicit information about where jurors should report while serving. Jurors should also be more informed about their rights, and have a clear understanding of the process of serving. Lessening juror confusion and stress will diminish jurors' feeling of "wasted time" and will promote comprehension during proceedings

**Utilize the resources and knowledge that the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) has developed in relation to assessment and communication with non-English speaking jurors.**

ESL professionals, not simply other court staff who have no prior education or experience in the field, should train court staff in how to properly conduct language-qualifying interviews.

**Continue to develop public information and resources that promote inclusion.**

- Provide multi-lingual information about the courts and court processes. The Unified Court System website is an example of a resource that could be made available in, at least, Spanish.
- Address unemployment concerns in the juror handbook and on the Unified Court System's website.
- Include information on the wireless access services in OCA's employment pamphlet.
- Collaborate with other state systems and the private sector to promote jury service and positive practices in relation to service.
- Increase communication between the courts and the press that report and publish in languages other than English.
- Create public service announcements that are multilingual and draw from the theme of diversity, a requirement for an effective jury system and a cherished reality in New York.

**Target environmental improvements in the courts.**

Jurors clearly respond to improvements made to the physical conditions within our courts. Courts must continually assess whether their facilities are accessible and safe. Timely response to the recommendations provided in the report will help to create clean and safe court environments.

## CONCLUSION

Jury reform has improved the administration of justice in New York, and jurors' perception of and performance within the jury system. In an effort to continue to improve the system, the Citizens Jury Project encourages the Unified Court System to implement the preceding recommendations. It is our hope that this and other CJP reports provide a framework that can be built upon. We look forward to continued collaborative work with the Office of Court Administration and courts throughout the state.



A CJP intern speaking with a juror at 60 Centre Street (pictured above) and a CJP intern working in the office (below).

