

## Jury Duty – A Litigator’s Dream? Part One

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Juror 996642 reporting for duty! There I was, responding to my first ever “SUMMONS FOR JURY DUTY.” I’d heard several stories over the years from legal colleagues and friends summoned, *voir dire*’d, and a couple who actually served on a jury. Not me. Decades of eligibility, but this was my virgin run! Perhaps I filled out the form differently this time? Had I been previously claiming an exemption? Honestly, I’ve no recollection of past years but have a vague recollection of making a conscious decision not to claim an exemption in hopes of serving. Voila!

As members of the Bar, especially those of us who spend a substantial time at the courthouse, we appreciate all too well the substantial amount of effort and resources that are required to provide access to justice. Here in Virginia, and Fairfax County, in particular, we are fortunate to have the resources we do (though we could always do more with more!) and an unyielding commitment to timely resolution of cases. To be sure, there will always be opportunities for improvement in the judicial system, many of which we as members of the legal community are uniquely empowered to pursue. Being willing to answer the call to serve and to accept the responsibility of possibly being asked to help decide the guilt/innocence or civil liability of a “peer” is an opportunity too easy not to partake.

Each state handles jury duty obligations differently. In fact, with both a federal and state court claiming jurisdiction over you no matter where you live, eligible jurors are at all times subject to multiple selection systems. In Virginia, the selection process differs from county to county. Fairfax County is the largest jurisdiction in the Commonwealth, with the most potential jurors. As a result, one answering the call to serve can anticipate it’s being at least several years before being summoned to serve again.

Here in the “land of the free, because of the brave,” where one’s “day in court” comes as a right and privilege for which so many have sacrificed so much, jury duty is really no sacrifice at all. So . . . client obligations, pending deadlines, other work, and family commitments aside . . . along with maybe 100-150 or so fellow Fairfax County residents answering the call, I am Juror 996642 . . . reporting for duty!

After the parade is over and all the fanfare and hoopla die down (not!) . . . my I.D. has been verified, and I have made myself comfortable in the assembly room. Polite smiles; quiet as expectations build; we wait. Next time . . . “*voir dire*.”