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LAURA RICHARD, County Clerk  
By Rebecca Cocco

**Fort Bend County Jury Plan  
(Amended as of August 21, 2024)**

BE IT KNOWN that there is hereby enacted by the Board of District Judges of Fort Bend County, Texas under Section 62.011 of the Texas Government Code the following "**Fort Bend County Jury Plan - Amended August 21, 2024**" (the "Plan"). Further, such Plan has been received and acknowledged by the Statutory County Court Judges of Fort Bend County, Texas. The Fort Bend Board of Judges recommends that the Commissioners' Court of Fort Bend County approves this Plan.

**I. Commissioners' Court**

- A. Determines the daily amount of reimbursement for expenses for jurors
- B. Adopts the *Fort Bend County Jury Plan* and future amendments
- C. Approves charities to which jurors may donate their juror pay
- D. Provides adequate facilities
- E. Provides proper equipment
- F. Provides necessary furnishing
- G. Provides reasonable accommodations for the deaf or hard of hearing

**II. Board of Judges**

- A. Approves the *Fort Bend County Jury Plan* and future amendments
- B. Appoints a District Judge as Jury Management Judge for the next year
- C. Determines approximate number of jurors necessary for each week for a general pool of jurors to be used interchangeably (*excludes capital cases and mental health proceedings*) for the following year for:
  1. Justice Courts
  2. Statutory County Courts
  3. District Court

**III. Administrative Judge**

Manages the Jury Assembly Room(s) with the assistance of the Courts Administrator

**IV. Jury Management Judge**

- A. Annually
  - a. Prepares/Amends the *Fort Bend County Jury Plan* as required and presents the *Fort Bend County Jury Plan* to the Board of Judges and Commissioners' Court
  - b. Implements the approved *Fort Bend County Jury Plan*

- c. Provides to the District Clerk by October 1 of each year a schedule with date, time, location and total number of jurors needed for next year's jury trials for the District Courts, the Statutory County Courts, and the Justice of the Peace Courts
  - d. Provides to the District Clerk by October 1 of each year a schedule of District Court Judges and Statutory County Court Judges who will be responsible for giving statutorily mandated admonishments and instructions to prospective jurors
  - e. Provides to the District Clerk by October 1 of each year a weekly schedule of judges who will be responsible for ruling on requests for excuses (excluding exemptions and disqualifications) or subsequent postponements
  - f. Provides to the District Clerk by October 1 of each year the *Order for Petit Jurors*
- B. Approves/Amends jury trial court schedule as per the requesting judge and notifies the District Clerk
  - C. Makes arrangements with the assistance of the Courts Administrator for space and time for Special Jury Pools, the Grand Jury and Incoming Transfer of Venue Cases so that arrangements do not interfere with regularly scheduled jury trial arrangements
  - D. District Court Judges, the Statutory County Court Judges, the Justices of the Peace, the District Clerk, Information Technology Department and the Courts Administrator will all work together with the Jury Management Judge serving as liaison
  - E. The Jury Management Judge shall coordinate the allocation of space for special panels. If a special panel is scheduled for a Tuesday, the processing of the special panel shall not begin until after the regular jury panels have been processed and assigned to their respective courts, unless an alternative arrangement is agreed upon by the Presiding Judge and the Jury Management Judge

**V. Trial Judge**

- A. Provides by September 1 of each year a schedule showing date, time, location and number of jurors needed for jury trial weeks/days to the Jury Management Judge
- B. Notifies the Jury Management Judge and the District Clerk of the need to call multiple panels for a trial week at least 8 weeks in advance
- C. Notifies the Jury Management Judge and District Clerk of any changes to the jury schedule or number of jurors needed at least 8 weeks in advance
- D. Notifies the District Clerk when a court orders the selection of jurors for a capital case or a mental health proceeding to ensure that the district clerk can summon jurors accordingly, facilitating the formation of interchangeable juries as required by law
- E. Notifies the District Clerk of cancellations as soon as possible when cancellations occur before the scheduled jury day

#### F. Jury Day Duties

- a. The assigned District Judge shall report promptly to the Jury Assembly Room no later than 9:00 am on the Tuesday of the assigned Judge's duty and be available to assist in the assembly and qualification process
- b. The assigned Statutory County Court at Law Judge shall report promptly to the Jury Assembly Room no later than 1:00 pm on the Tuesday of the assigned Judge's duty and be available to assist in the assembly and qualification process
- c. Notifies Jury Management Judge of the Judge's inability to appear for the Judge's court assignment and finds a replacement to fulfill the Judge's assigned duties
- d. District Court Judges will give admonishments, instructions and administer the oath to empaneled jurors for District Court pools. If unable to appear, the assigned judge will locate a replacement judge and notify the Jury Management Judge and District Clerk prior to the date of assignment
- e. Statutory County Court Judges will give admonishments, instructions and administer the oath to empaneled jurors for County Court pools. If unable to appear, the assigned judge will locate a replacement judge and notify the Jury Management Judge and District Clerk prior to the date of assignment
- f. Justices of the Peace will give admonishments, instructions and administer the oath to empaneled jurors for Justice Court pools
- g. Justices of the Peace will notify the District Clerk of any juror who is excused or needs to be postponed due to late arrival
- h. Dismisses prospective jurors when they are no longer needed: cancellations, plea bargains, etc.
- i. The assigned judge shall be responsible for ruling on all excuses (excluding statutory exemptions and disqualifications) and subsequent postponements from prospective summoned jurors
- j. Notifies the District Clerk of the number of jurors needed on their panel as soon as possible on jury selection days
- k. Notifies the assigned Judge and the District Clerk as soon as possible of the need to use unassigned prospective jurors

#### G. Special Venires

- a. Notifies the Jury Management Judge and the District Clerk *at least 8 weeks in advance* of the need for a special panel of jurors
  1. date and time of special venire
  2. number of jurors needed for voir dire
  3. special requirements needed (ex: individual voir dire, death penalty, etc.)
  4. special questionnaire
- b. Provides questionnaire(s) to the District Clerk at least one week in advance

- c. Judge requesting a special panel shall be responsible for administering admonishments, instructions and administer the oath to special panel of jurors
  - d. The Jury Management Judge shall coordinate the allocation of space for special panels. If a special panel is scheduled for a Tuesday, the processing of the special panel shall not begin until after the regular jury panels have been processed and assigned to their respective courts, unless an alternative arrangement is agreed upon by the Presiding Judge and the Jury Management Judge
- H. District Court Judges, the Statutory County Court Judges, the Justices of the Peace, the District Clerk, Information Technology Department and the Courts Administrator will all work together with the Jury Management Judge serving as liaison

**VI. District Clerk**

- A. Provides personnel and equipment to carry out the *Fort Bend County Jury Plan* at the Justice Center
- B. Provides a telephone number and e-mail address for prospective jurors to make contact regarding postponements, excuses, and exemptions prior to the date of service
- C. Requests Jury Wheel from Secretary of State
- D. Creates and maintains an acceptable jury summons
- E. Creates and maintains an appropriate juror donation form
- F. Calls a sufficient number of prospective jurors on scheduled jury days to meet the needs of the requesting judges as determined by the Jury Management Judge
- G. Summons prospective jurors for the Justice of Peace Courts within their respective precincts
- H. Prepares a list of the special panel in a capital case in which the state seeks the death penalty
- I. Processes exemptions, disqualifications and initial postponements
- J. Summons jurors to appear as required
- K. Processes prospective jurors into the Jury Assembly Room(s) and takes attendance
- L. Provides necessary forms and writing materials for prospective jurors who failed to report to duty with properly completed juror profiles
- M. Notifies the Language Access Office to arrange accommodations for prospective jurors who request sign language interpreters or require hearing devices, ensuring these services are available from the Jury Assembly Room to the Court Room
- N. Administers oaths and instructions as permitted by law
- O. Electronically pulls panels as requested by the Trial Judge randomly from the qualified prospective jurors remaining in the Jury Assembly Room(s)
- P. Prepares at least 7 copies of the randomized panel packet and corresponding Juror Profiles

- Q. Prepares a confidential second randomized panel packet and corresponding juror profiles, in case there is a request for a jury shuffle, and sends this alternate list with the panel to the respective court (Not done for Justice of the Peace courts)
- R. Collaborate with the District Judges to make the decision regarding when to reconstitute the jury wheel
- S. Accounts for jurors time in service
- T. Prepares certificates of service for jurors whose service is not needed
- U. Provides information needed for payment of the appropriate amount to each juror
- V. Retains, at the conclusion of voir dire, all Juror Profiles and questionnaires
- W. Collects and enters juror donations
- X. Prepares and submits statutorily required jury reports
- Y. All official records of the jury division of the District Clerk's Office shall be preserved according to the Texas State Library and Archives Commission retention schedule
- Z. District Court Judges, the Statutory County Court Judges, the Justices of the Peace, the District Clerk, Information Technology Department and the Courts Administrator will all work together with the Jury Management Judge serving as liaison

#### **VII. Courts Administrator**

- A. Manages the Jury Assembly Room(s) with the assistance of the Administrative Judge
- B. District Court Judges, the Statutory County Court Judges, the Justices of the Peace, the District Clerk, Information Technology Department and the Courts Administrator will all work together with the Jury Management Judge serving as liaison

#### **VIII. Language Access Office**

- A. A deaf or hard of hearing person serving as a juror shall be reasonably accommodated in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Interpreters and hearing devices will be provided, and the devices will be maintained in the Jury Assembly Room and courtroom during all proceedings to ensure effective communication and full participation of the jurors

#### **IX. Court Clerk**

- A. Takes attendance and accounts for jurors time in service and provide to the District Clerk
- B. Prepares certificate of service for jurors whose service is no longer needed and provides to the District Clerk
- C. Provides to the District Clerk necessary information needed to make appropriate payment to each juror

- D. Ensures the return of all Juror Profiles and questionnaires at the conclusion of voir dire and provides these returned items to the District Clerk
- E. Collects juror donation forms, if needed, and provides donation forms to the District Clerk
- F. Swears-in empaneled jurors at the request of the presiding judge

**X. Sheriff/ Bailiff**

- A. Assigns one or more deputies as Central Jury Bailiffs
- B. Provides security and evacuation instructions
- C. Calls panel roll
- D. Notifies Court Bailiffs when prospective jurors are ready to be released to the courts
- E. Escorts jurors from the Jury Assembly Room(s) to the assigned trial court

**XI. Information Technology**

- A. Tests prospective juror data for:
  - a. Goodness of fit
  - b. A reasonable and fair distribution of selected names from each geographical area of the county
  - c. A reasonable and equal distribution of selected names from each segment of the alphabet
  - d. Ensure randomness of the jury pool
- B. District Court Judges, the Statutory County Court Judges, the Justices of the Peace, the District Clerk, Information Technology Department and the Courts Administrator will all work together with the Jury Management Judge serving as liaison
- C. Contacts the Secretary of State at the request of the District Clerk
- D. Downloads the jury wheel from the Secretary of State
- E. Uploads jury wheel into the jury database
- F. Ensures randomization
- G. Maintains the jury system and any updates to the jury system
- H. Provides and maintain hearing devices for hard of hearing jurors

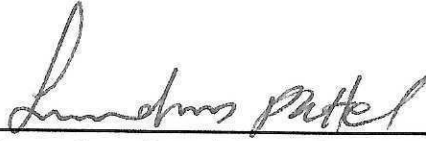
**XII. District Clerk/Auditor/Treasurer**


- A. Pays petit jurors \$20 for their initial day of service and \$58 for each subsequent day of actual attendance regardless of whether they serve a whole day or a fraction of the day
- B. Pays grand jurors \$20 for their initial day of service and \$58 for each subsequent day of actual attendance regardless of whether they serve a whole day or a fraction of the day


This *Fort Bend County Jury Plan – Amended August 21, 2024* may be further amended or modified from time to time upon the recommendation of a majority of the District Judges. No partial invalidity of this *Plan* shall affect the remainder.


This *Plan*, upon its adoption by the Fort Bend County Board of District Judges, shall be recorded in the minutes of the District Courts and Statutory County Courts of Fort Bend County and shall become effective on this 23 day of August, 2024.


**BOARD OF JUDGES**

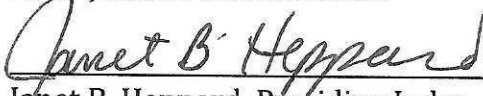
  
Surendran Pattel, Presiding Judge  
240<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court


  
Monica Rawlins, Presiding Judge  
328<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court

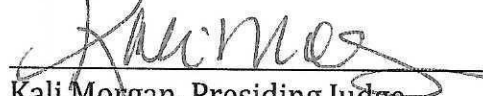
  
Tameika Carter, Presiding Judge  
400<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court

  
Chad Bridges, Presiding Judge  
458<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court

  
Steve Rogers, Presiding Judge  
268<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court

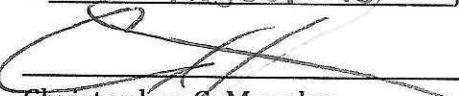
  
Janet B. Heppard, Presiding Judge  
387<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court

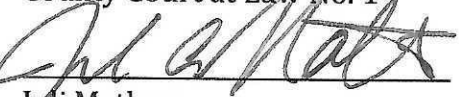
  
Christian Becerra, Presiding Judge  
434<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court

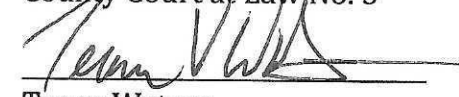
  
Kali Morgan, Presiding Judge  
505<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court


**RECEIVED AND ACKNOWLEDGED**

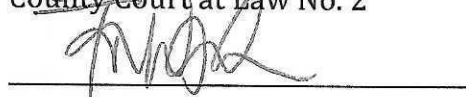
This *Fort Bend County Jury Plan - Amended August 21, 2024*, upon its adoption of the Board of District Judges, is hereby **RECEIVED AND ACKNOWLEDGED** by the County Court at Law Judges of Fort Bend County, Texas, on this day of AUGUST 23, 2024.

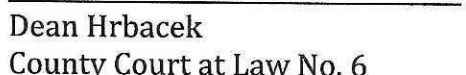
  
Christopher G. Morales  
County Court at Law No. 1

  
Juli Mathew  
County Court at Law No. 3

  
Teana Watson  
County Court at Law No. 5

  
Tyra McCollum  
County Court at Law No. 2

  
Toni Wallace  
County Court at Law No. 4

  
Dean Hrbacek  
County Court at Law No. 6