

Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE June 7, 2019

TO Honorable Members of the Public Safety and Criminal Justice Committee

SUBJECT **Juror Summons Process**

The attached presentation will provide an overview of the juror summons process and will highlight steps taken to improve the low attendance rate.

The Dallas Municipal Court has struggled with a 14% juror attendance rate. Recent steps taken to improve attendance include, increasing the number of juror summons, implementing a \$6 juror payment, and changes to the envelope. The most recent change includes adding penalty language to the juror summons.

Please contact me if you have any questions or need additional information.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Fortune".

Jon Fortune
Assistant City Manager

c: T.C. Broadnax, City Manager
Chris Caso, City Attorney (Interim)
Mark Swann, City Auditor
Billieae Johnson, City Secretary
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, Chief of Staff to the City Manager
Majed A. Al-Ghafry, Assistant City Manager

Joey Zapata, Assistant City Manager
Nadia Chandler Hardy, Assistant City Manager and Chief Resilience Officer
Michael Mendoza, Chief of Economic Development and Neighborhood Services
M. Elizabeth Reich, Chief Financial Officer
Laila Alequresh, Chief Innovation Officer
Directors and Assistant Directors

Juror Summons Process

Public Safety and Criminal Justice Committee

June 10, 2019

**Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge
Chris Caso, City Attorney**



Presentation Overview

- Purpose
- Background
- Steps to Improve Attendance Rate
- Juror Summons Process
- Future Initiatives

Purpose

To provide an understanding of the Dallas Municipal Courts' juror summons process, including steps taken to improve the attendance rate

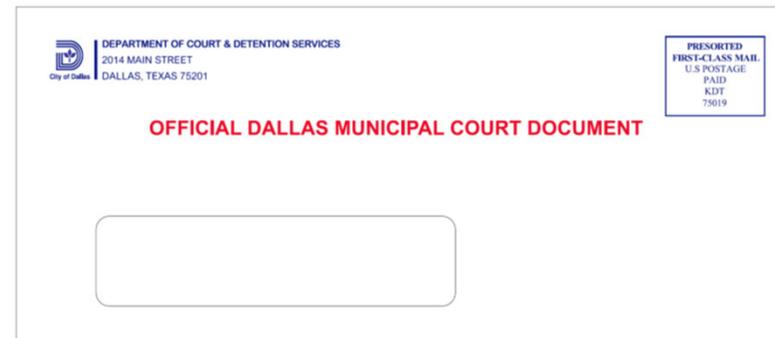
Background

- The Texas Government Code governs the juror summons process
- The Code mandates specific qualifications to be a juror and provides exemptions and disqualifications from jury service
- The Dallas Municipal Courts has struggled with a low attendance rate of approximately 14%
 - Leads to reset cases which requires officers and defendants to make multiple appearances
 - Clogs docket
 - Pushes cases back

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Steps to Improve Attendance Rate

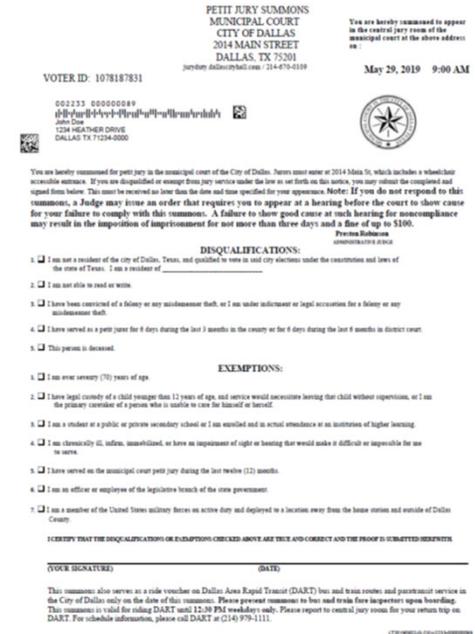
- September 2018 - Increased number of summons from 200 to 300 per session
 - 2 jury sessions held per day (Wednesday & Thursday)
- November 2018 - Implemented \$6 juror payment
- January 2019 - Added language to envelope to discourage discarding



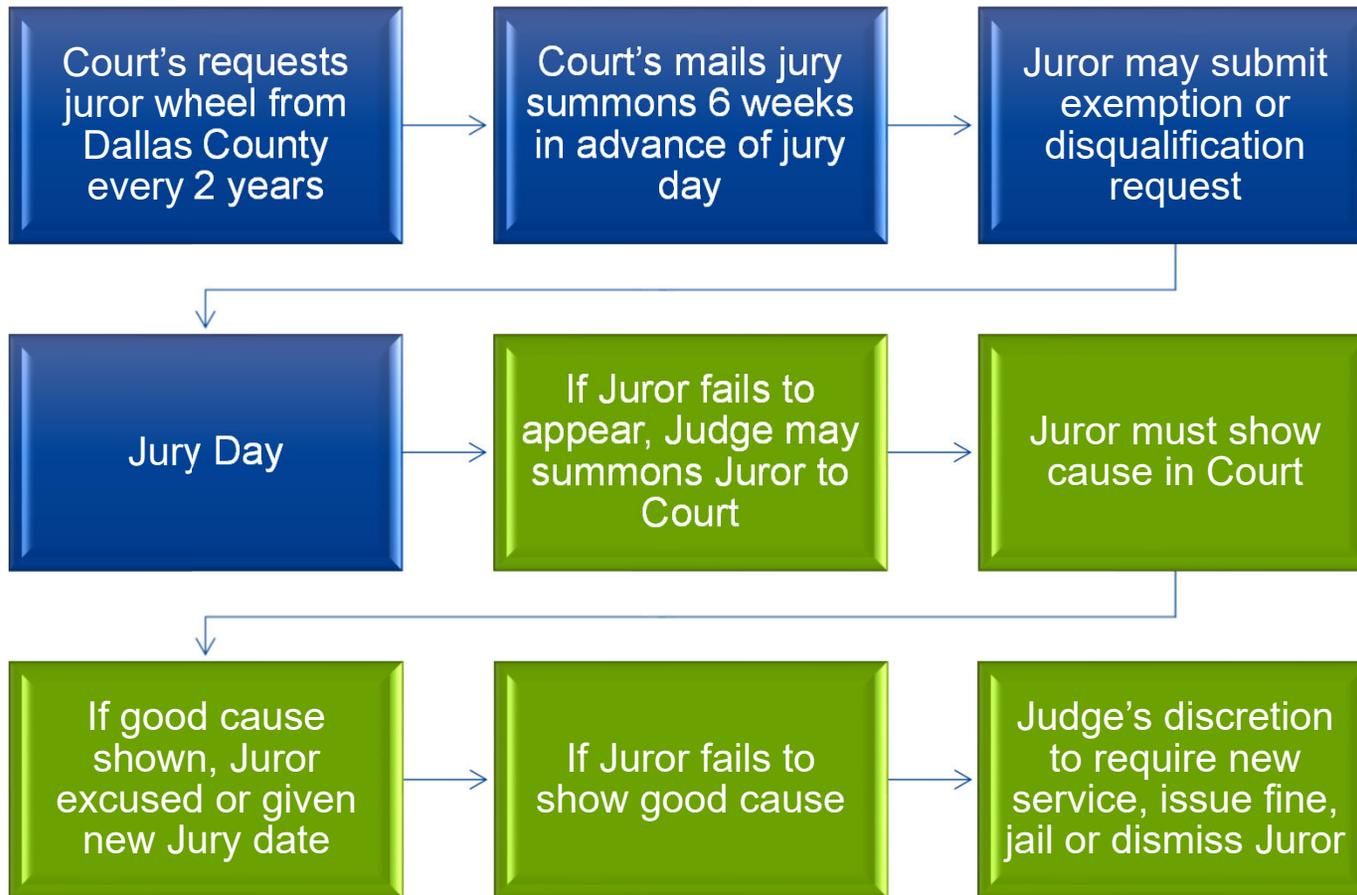
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Steps to Improve Attendance Rate

- May 2019 - Added penalty language to jury summons
 - Includes jail and fine warning
 - If Juror fails to appear, Judge may summons Juror to Court
 - Juror must show cause for failure to comply
 - If Juror fails to show cause as to why they did not appear, Judge may:
 - Order jury service on another day; or
 - Order a fine not to exceed \$100; or
 - Order confinement not to exceed 3 days in jail



Juror Summons Process



Indicates new process

Future Initiatives

- Revamp of current jury summons to include questionnaire to streamline voir dire process
- Working towards an electronic jury portal
 - Option to electronically reschedule or show exemption or disqualification
 - Ability to complete questionnaire electronically before arrival
 - Text message or email notifications regarding being excused for jury service

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