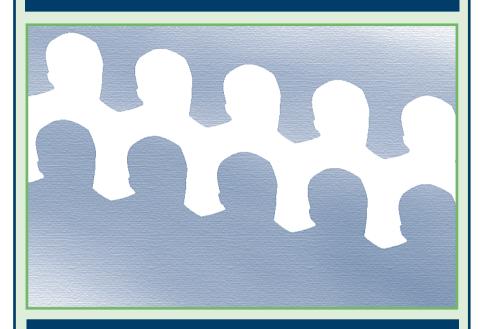
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ENHANCING THE TRIAL PROCESS FOR ALL PARTICIPANTS

## **A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR TRIAL JUDGES**

## Preface

#### JONATHAN LIPPMAN, CHIEF JUDGE



FOR THE PAST FIFTEEN YEARS, THE REFORM OF JURY SERVICE BY THE NEW YORK STATE COURT SYSTEM HAS SERVED AS A NATIONAL MODEL. The elimination of virtually all professional and personal exemptions and the reduction of the length of individual service have diversified the composition of jury panels. In addition, all those who serve receive a minimum six year hiatus before recall for jury service. Much needed renovations to aging courthouses have modernized our facilities, both physically and technologically. Today, juror qualification questionnaires can be completed online, requests for

first postponements can be electronically submitted and jurors can log onto the Internet to check if they must report to the courthouse the next day. These signature achievements vastly improved juror satisfaction and public opinion regarding jury service. Equally significant, these reforms inspired the Jury Trial Project, a group of 51 judges from 16 counties throughout the State, who gathered to consider ways to promote better juror comprehension of trial content resulting in more informed verdicts. Overall, these efforts were designed to improve the discharge of an important civic duty.

THIS BOOKLET OFFERS GUIDELINES AND TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS the "working group" of judges piloted in their trials and documented in the Jury Trial Project Final Report (available at www.nyjuryinnovations.org). For example, notebooks were given to jurors to allow them to take notes during trial, jurors were permitted to submit written questions to the judge about evidence, attorneys were encouraged to offer a brief statement prior to voir dire to increase the jurors' understanding of the case, and a written copy of the judge's charge was given to the jury to use during deliberations. These innovative practices were carefully studied and examined as described in the Report, resulting in the recommendation that they become common, everyday practice.

THE MATERIAL IN THIS BOOKLET, INCLUDING SUGGESTED PROCEDURES AND INSTRUCTIONS AND RESEARCH SOURCES, serves as a springboard for our continuing efforts to improve the quality of jury trials, thereby instilling public trust and confidence in our judicial system. It is thanks to your hard work and dedication that jury service has become a positive opportunity to participate in the judicial process.

April, 2009

## Table of Contents

| Introduction                              |
|---|
| Recommendations of the Jury Trial Project |
| Voir Dire Openings4                       |
| Note-Taking by Jurors 4                   |
| Questions by Jurors4                      |
| Written Copy of the Judge's Charge        |
| Authority and Suggested Procedures        |
| for Recommended Practices6                |
| Suggested Procedures for Implementation   |
| Voir Dire Openings6                       |
|   |
| Note-Taking                               |
| Note-Taking 8   Juror Questions 10        |
|   |
| Juror Questions                           |
| Juror Questions                           |

#### INTRODUCTION

THIS PAMPHLET PROVIDES NEW YORK STATE JUDGES WITH AN OVERVIEW of authority for implementing some of the jury trial practices recommended by the court system's Jury Trial Project. It includes tools to assist judges in doing so. The heart of the pamphlet is a section on Authority and Suggested Procedures for Recommended Practices highlighting New York State law (as of Fall 2005). Included are suggested procedures for implementing each recommendation and suggested instructions to the jury.

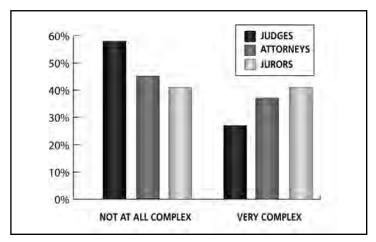
This pamphlet begins with a summary of the findings and recommendations of the Jury Trial Project. The pamphlet ends with a convenient list of other research and commentary concerning jury trial innovations.

The Jury Trial Project began in January 2003. Administrative Judges across the state invited 51 judges from 16 counties to participate in an effort to experiment with jury trial innovations. Over the course of 2004, 26 of the judges sat on 112 trials in which one or more innovative jury trial practice was used and questionnaires were completed by the judge and the 926 jurors and 210 attorneys involved in those trials. In addition, some participating judges used some of the recommended practices in trials, but did not participate in data-gathering.

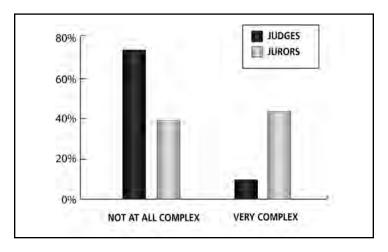
As a result of these efforts, the Committees of the Jury Trial Project issued recommendations in May 2005 to all New York State trial judges, some of which are summarized here. The Project's full report is available at **www.nyjuryinnovations.org**. These recommendations echo those made in the ABA's Principles for Juries and Jury Trials which are available at HTTP://www.ABANET.ORG/JURY/PRINCIPLES.HTML

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY TRIAL PROJECT**

**RESEARCH FINDINGS OF THE JURY TRIAL PROJECT SUGGEST THAT JURORS NEED ASSISTANCE IN DOING THEIR JOBS WELL.** This need is highlighted in jurors' views of trial complexity. While jurors tend to view trials as being very complex, judges tend to look at the same trials as being not at all complex. Attorneys' views are in between - more likely than judges to say that a trial was complex but less likely than jurors to give a high complexity rating.



This difference in perspective is even greater in criminal trials where only 8% of judges thought the trial was very complex while nearly half the jurors thought the trial was very complex.



#### **RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JURY TRIAL PROJECT**

#### **VOIR DIRE OPENINGS**

The Committee on Voir Dire recommends that judges allow each counsel (with consent of both parties) to give a short statement of the case generally no more than five minutes—at the outset of voir dire. Judges and attorneys who participated in trials where voir dire openings were used agreed that these short statements improved voir dire. Jurors who heard voir dire openings had a better understanding of what the trial would be about than did those who did not.

#### NOTE-TAKING BY JURORS

Note-taking has long been approved by the Court of Appeals. *People v. Hues*, 92 N.Y.2d 413 (1998). Nevertheless, many judges and attorneys fear that juror note-taking will distract jurors' attention or lead note-takers to dominate deliberations. Data was collected from 91 New York State civil and criminal trials in which jurors were permitted to take notes. Both the data and anecdotal reports confirm research elsewhere that discounts concerns that note-taking may be distracting. The Committee on Note-taking recommends that all judges permit jurors who wish to do so to take notes and that all jurors be provided with note-taking materials. CJI2d [NY] Notetaking (Revised Oct. 25, 2001) is recommended as a basic instruction.

#### **QUESTIONS BY JURORS**

Jurors were permitted to submit written questions for witnesses in 74 trials. The Committee on Juror Questions concluded that judges should have the discretion to allow jurors to submit written questions. Sixteen judges, 130 attorneys and 564 jurors who participated in these trials completed questionnaires. For 19 trials, data were collected on the numbers of questions submitted. The New York experience with juror questions was similar to experiences elsewhere. All federal circuits have held that it is within the trial judges' discretion to permit jurors to submit questions. At least 31 states endorse the practice by appellate holding or by court rule. Highlights of the New York project are:

- JURORS RARELY SUBMITTED IMPROPER QUESTIONS. Generally, attorneys and judges agreed about which juror questions were improper. Of 347 questions submitted in 19 trials, only 41 were objected to and 37 of those were not asked. In criminal trials, 157 questions were submitted, 25 were objected to and of those, two were asked. In civil trials, 190 questions were submitted, 16 were objected to and of those, two were asked.
- JURORS DID NOT GO ON EVIDENTIARY FISHING EXPEDITIONS. In civil trials an average of 2.5 questions were asked. In criminal trials an average of 4.7 questions were asked. Slightly more than one-third of the jurors said they asked questions: most asked only one or two.
- JUROR QUESTIONS WERE NOT TIME CONSUMING. Juror questions added less than 10 minutes to civil trials and 15 minutes to criminal trials.
- ATTORNEYS FEAR THAT JURORS WILL BECOME ADVOCATES OR USURP THE ATTORNEYS' ADVERSARY ROLE. There is no evidence that this occurred in the 74 New York trials or in other jurisdictions where jurors are permitted to submit questions.
- EXPERIENCE MAKES A DIFFERENCE. Attorneys who participated in a trial where jurors were permitted to submit questions were twice as likely to approve of the process as those who participated in trials where the process was not used. Two-thirds of attorneys in trials where juror questions were permitted felt that no improper questions were submitted.

#### WRITTEN COPY OF THE JUDGE'S CHARGE

In 39 trials, deliberating jurors were provided with a written copy of the judge's final charge. The Committee on Jury Instructions concluded that written instructions can assist jurors in correctly fulfilling their responsibilities. This practice is approved by all federal circuits and permitted or required in at least 29 states.

## Voir Dire Openings

## Voir dire openings by counsel to the entire panel at the outset of voir dire.

| CIVIL AUTHORITY   | CRIMINAL AUTHORITY   |
|---|--|
| No appellate case law<br>expressly permits, requires<br>or prohibits. | Not addressed by CPL §260.30<br>and §270.15(1)(b). Consent and<br>participation of both parties<br>required. |

#### SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

- 1. Each counsel shall be given a brief period of time (about five minutes) to summarize the case from its point of view. The time allotted for the voir dire openings should be added to the usual time allotted for voir dire.
- 2. Counsel should be given notice as early as possible of the court's intent to permit voir dire openings. When counsel is informed of the procedure, reasonable time should be given to allow them to collect their thoughts and prepare.
- 3. Counsel can be invited to give voir dire openings to the entire panel.
- **4.** The procedure should be used only with consent of counsel for both sides and with both sides' participation.

## SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CRIMINAL MATTERS

- 1. *Rosario* material should be provided to defense counsel before any voir dire opening.
- 2. A defender's decision to make a voir dire opening does not preclude exercising the defendant's right not to make an opening statement at the start of the trial.
- **3.** The People's voir dire opening should be first, and there should be no rebuttal.

#### SUGGESTED JUDGE'S INSTRUCTION

#### Hon. William O'Brien

**BEFORE WE BEGIN THE PROCESS** of asking you questions about your qualifications to serve in this case, each attorney will give a brief statement about the case. I've asked them to limit their remarks to a brief presentation. What the attorneys say to you by way of their opening remarks both now, and again later just before we begin hearing from the witnesses, is not evidence. These statements are offered to you now as a kind of "preview" of the case. The purpose in doing so is to allow us a greater opportunity to explore with you anything that might impact your ability to serve fairly and impartially as a juror in this case.

## Note-Taking

#### Permitting jurors to take notes.

#### AUTHORITY

*People v. Hues*, 92 N.Y. 2d 413 (1998); Uniform Rules – Trial Courts §220.10. Note-taking by Jurors. Judge to decide whether to permit jurors to take notes before opening statements.

#### SUGGESTED PROCEDURE

- 1. Provide each juror with note-taking materials. Steno pads and marble covered books are preferred by some because they have hard cover and back and can be closed at the end of the day. Others use yellow ruled legal pads and instruct jurors to use the top page as a cover page. Others use three-ring binders which can be filled with fresh paper for each trial.
- 2. Most judges who allow note-taking allow it throughout the trial, including: opening statements, closing arguments and the judge's charge. To assure that jurors make distinctions between notes about evidence and notes about argument Judge Dana Winslow instructs note-taking jurors to draw a heavy dark line across the page after opening statements and before closing arguments.
- **3.** Ask jurors to leave their notes at their seats at the end of each session or each day.
- 4. If jurors are permitted to keep their notes with them during breaks they should be reminded that the notes are for their own use and should not be shared with others.
- 5. Collect and destroy the notes at the end of the trial.

#### CJI 2D [NY] NOTETAKING (REVISED OCT. 25, 2001)

YOU MAY, BUT ARE NOT REQUIRED TO, TAKE NOTES during these proceedings. If you wish to take notes, we will provide materials to you for that purpose. If you decide to take notes, you must follow these rules:

- You must not permit note-taking to distract you from the proceedings.
- Any notes taken are only an aid to your memory and must not take precedence over your independent recollection.
- Those jurors who choose not to take notes must rely on their own independent recollection, and must not be influenced by any notes that another juror may take.
- Any notes you take are only for your own personal use in refreshing your recollection.

A JUROR'S NOTES ARE NOT A SUBSTITUTE for the recorded transcript of the testimony or for any exhibit received in evidence. If there is a discrepancy between a juror's recollection and his or her notes regarding the evidence, you should ask to have the relevant testimony read back or the exhibit produced in the jury room.

In addition, a juror's notes are not a substitute for the detailed explanation I will give you of the principles of law that govern this case. If there is a discrepancy between a juror's recollection and his or her notes regarding those principles, you should ask me to explain those principles again, and I will be happy to do so.

At the end of each trial day until the jury retires to deliberate, the notes will be collected from each juror who takes notes. A juror may only refer to his or her notes during the proceedings and during deliberations.

Any notes taken are confidential and shall not be available for examination or review by any party or other person. After the jury has rendered its verdict, we will collect the notes and destroy them.

## Juror Questions

## Allowing jurors to submit written questions for witnesses.

| CIVIL AUTHORITY  | CRIMINAL AUTHORITY  |
|--|---|
| Sitrin Brothers, Inc. v Deluxe<br>Lines, 35 Misc.2d 1041, 1042-<br>1043 (County Ct., Oneida<br>Co.1962) [jurors' questioning of<br>expert witness was not prejudi-<br>cial]. Permitted in NJ and Conn.<br>at judge's discretion. NJ Rules<br>of General Application, 1:8-8c.<br>Conn Rules of Court §16-7. | At discretion of judge. <i>People v.</i><br><i>Gonzalez</i> , 50 A.D.3d 527 (1st<br>Dept. 2008) Iv. to appeal denied<br>10N.Y.3d 959 (2008); <i>People v.</i><br><i>Miller</i> , 8 A.D.3d 176 (1st Dept.<br>2004)(subsequent history omit-<br>ted); <i>People v. Knapper</i> , 230<br>A.D. 487 (1st Dept. 1930). No<br>other NYS appellate court has<br>expressly addressed the issue.<br>See also <i>United States v. Bush</i> ,<br>47 F.3rd 511 (2nd Cir. 1995)<br>discouraging but endorsing the<br>procedure. Permitted by Conn.<br>Rules of Court §42-9. |

#### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### Should jurors who submit questions be identified?

A: The Committee made no recommendation on this issue. The ABA Principles Relating to Juries and Jury Trials are silent on this issue as are the rules concerning juror questions in Indiana and New Jersey. Arizona and Colorado instruct jurors NOT to identify themselves. In Massachusetts jurors are asked to include their seat number on the question.

#### Where should jurors write their questions?

**A:** Jurors write their questions while sitting in the jury box. Some judges give jurors photocopied pages that include the case caption and lines.

Others instruct jurors to use a piece of paper from their note-taking pad or binder. In any event, jurors should be reminded not to discuss their questions with each other.

#### When should jurors' questions be submitted?

A: Some judges instruct jurors to submit a question whenever it occurs to them by catching the attention of a court officer. Others instruct jurors to hold questions until the witness's testimony is complete as the question may be answered by later testimony. Among those who ask jurors to wait until the witness's testimony is complete, some provide a short break at the end of each witness to give jurors time to formulate questions. Others simply glance over to the jury to see if any juror is writing a question

## Where does the judge consult with counsel about the questions?

A: Usually at the bench while the jury remains in the jury box.

#### How do judges decide whether to pose a juror's question?

- Some rely only upon evidentiary rules and ask any question they determine is proper.
- Some inform counsel that a question will not be asked if both parties object to it.
- Some inform counsel that a question will not be asked if either party objects to it.

#### Who asks jurors' questions?

A: The judge.

#### Should counsel be allowed follow-up?

A: Yes. Appropriate follow-up questions are generally limited to the specific subject matter addressed in the juror's question.

#### What happens to the questions submitted?

A: Juror questions are made a part of the trial record.

## Juror Questions

#### SUGGESTED INSTRUCTION

#### Hon. William Donnino

THE LAWYERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR QUESTIONING THE WITNESSES. The Court may at times ask a witness a question.

JURORS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR LISTENING CAREFULLY TO ALL THE TESTIMONY and other evidence and rendering a fair verdict based on the evidence presented to them. Thus, jurors do not regularly question witnesses. In a rare instance, a juror may, however, wish to ask a question which will clarify in the juror's mind something the witness testified to. Here are the rules for submitting questions.

**FIRST**, because you will often find that a question which you would like to ask is eventually asked by a lawyer, please do not write a question down while the lawyers are questioning the witness. When the lawyers are finished questioning a witness and before the witness is excused, you may, if you wish, write a question for the witness. Please [do not write your name on the paper and] do not feel compelled to write a question, and do not at any time discuss with a fellow juror or anyone else whether to ask a question or what to ask.

**SECOND**, if you do write a question, the question should be designed to obtain relevant information, usually of a clarifying nature. Your questions should not, directly or indirectly, express your opinion of the witness or the case, or seek to argue with the witness. Nor are you to assume the role of investigator or advocate. You are the impartial finders of fact and your questions therefore should be neutral in tone and substance and limited to clarifying something which a witness has testified to. Again, please do not feel compelled to write a question. A question from a juror should be the exception, not the rule.

# **THIRD**, your question will be subject to the same rules of evidence that apply to questions that lawyers ask. I will thus review your written question with the lawyers and decide whether or not to permit the question as written or as revised in a legally permissible form. I will ask the witness any authorized questions.

**IF YOUR QUESTION IS NOT ASKED**, or is asked in a different form, please do not be offended, do not speculate as to why the question was not asked, or as to what the answer would have been, and do not draw any unfavorable inference against the People or the defendant.

AFTER THE WITNESS HAS ANSWERED YOUR QUESTION, the lawyers will be permitted to ask any relevant follow-up questions.

## Juror Questions

#### SUGGESTED INSTRUCTION

#### Hon. Stanley Sklar

UNDER OUR SYSTEM, IT IS THE LAWYERS' JOB TO ASK QUESTIONS of a witness. I may at rare times also ask a witness a question.

YOUR JOB AS JURORS IS TO CAREFULLY CONSIDER ALL OF THE TESTIMONY and other evidence and come out with a fair verdict based on the evidence. So jurors usually do not question witnesses. In a rare instance a juror may, however, want to ask a question to clarify something the witness said. I will allow you to ask a clarifying question if you follow these rules.

ANY QUESTION MUST BE WRITTEN DOWN on a piece of paper and given to the court officer for my review. Please include your name or juror number. Do not give the court officer your question immediately. Often a question that you would like to ask is promptly asked by one of the lawyers. However, if the lawyer doesn't ask your question right away, you may submit your question. Before submitting a question you must not discuss the proposed question or its wording among yourselves.

YOU SHOULD ONLY ASK QUESTIONS TO CLARIFY a witness's testimony. For example, you may hear a medical term used that you have never heard of and feel the need to know its meaning. Your questions should also be relevant to the issues in this trial so that we don't get bogged down. When you ask questions, remember that you are an impartial judge of the facts. This means that you must not in any way express your opinion of the witness or the case. You must not try to be an investigator or a detective, or try to help any party. Like me, you should let the lawyers, who have lived with the case for a long time, try the case as they see it. You should not feel that you have to ask a question. I WILL REVIEW ALL QUESTIONS WITH THE LAWYERS. Your questions, like those of the lawyers, are governed by the rules of evidence, and I may have to change or even not ask your question. If so, don't be offended, or hold it against any party, or speculate as to what the answer to your question might have been.

**IF I ALLOW THE QUESTION, THEN I WILL ASK IT.** The lawyers will be allowed to ask follow-up questions.

**FINALLY**, while you may give the answer to a question such importance as you believe is appropriate, you must not give the answers to any of your own questions any greater or lesser importance, just because you asked the questions. Remember that you are NOT [emphasize with voice] one of the lawyers, and you must remain neutral fact-finders throughout the trial. You must consider ALL [emphasize with voice] of the evidence fully and fairly to arrive at a true and just verdict.

# Written Copy of Judge's Charge

## Providing deliberating juries with written copy or copies of judge's final charge.

| CIVIL AUTHORITY  | CRIMINAL AUTHORITY  |
|--|---|
| Providing final instructions in<br>writing to the deliberating jury<br>is at the discretion of the court.<br>Uniform Rules -Trial Courts<br>§220.11 Copy of Judge's<br>Charge to Jury. | Consent of the parties is<br>required. <i>People v. Owens</i> , 69<br>N.Y.2d 585 (1987); <i>People v.</i><br><i>Johnson</i> , 81 N.Y.2d 980 (1993).<br>Not error to project charge on<br>wall for jurors to follow along<br>while judge reads. <i>People v.</i><br><i>Williams</i> , 8 A.D. 3d 963 (4th<br>Dept. 2004) (subsequent<br>history omitted). |

#### SUGGESTED PROCEDURES

- Projecting the charge on the wall while the judge is reading it
- Providing copies to the jurors to follow along while the judge reads
- Providing one or more copies of the full transcribed charge to the jury after they retire to deliberate
- Providing one or more copies of selected parts of the charge (for example, instructions on reasonable doubt and presumption of innocence along with the elements for each of the crimes charged)

#### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR CRIMINAL MATTERS**

**CONSENT OF THE PARTIES IS REQUIRED.** Public Defense representatives recommend that the jury be informed they may request the charge in writing. If the request is made the full charge should be provided to the jury "as given" (i.e., the corrected transcript).

#### SAMPLE INSTRUCTION

#### Hon. Richard Price

#### Where only portions of the charge are sent to the jury in writing:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, I am sending in with you a copy of a selected portion of the charge I just gave to you, which is that portion setting forth what the law requires of you regarding the Presumption of Innocence, and the necessity for Proof Beyond a Reasonable Doubt, and also the charges listing the elements of each of the four crimes I am submitting to you.

YOU MAY REFER TO THIS AS NEEDED. Of course, this is not evidence in the case and, if you have any questions or require clarification, please send a note out to me and we can bring you back into the courtroom and I will try to address your concern.

#### ANNOTATED VERDICT SHEETS IN CRIMINAL TRIALS

**UNDER CPL 310.20** "Whenever the court submits two or more counts charging a violation of the same article of a law defining an offense, the court may set forth the dates, names of complainants or specific statutory language, without defining the terms, by which the counts may be distinguished; provided, however, that the court shall instruct the jury in its charge that the sole purpose of the notations is to distinguish between the counts charging a violation of the same section of the law; \*\*\*". Thus, where, for example a defendant is charged with both Murder in the Second Degree and Manslaughter in the First Degree the definitions of these two crimes may be included on the verdict sheet.

A VERDICT SHEET MAY ALSO INCLUDE a "direction regarding the order in which the submitted charges should be considered." *People v. Cole*, 85 N.Y.2d 990, 992 (1995); *People v. Collins*, 99 N.Y.2d 14 (2000). Thus, where a defendant is charged both with Murder in the Second Degree and Manslaughter in the First Degree, the Verdict sheet can include the following instructions: If you find the defendant guilty of count 1, do not consider count 2. If you find the defendant not guilty of count 1, consider count 2.

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Hon. Augustus Agate Queens County Alternatives to Trial

Hon. PhyLis BAMBERGER Bronx County Jury Instructions, Order of Trial

Hon. David Michael Barry Monroe County Voir Dire

Hon. PETER BENITEZ Bronx County Note-taking, Notebooks

Hon. EILEEN BRANSTEN New York County Juror Questions

Hon. JEFFERY BROWN Nassau County Jury Instructions, Order of Trial

Hon. BRIAN D. BURNS Otsego County Voir Dire

Hon. Fernando Camacho Queens County

Hon. JOHN CARTER Kings County Juror Questions

Hon. FELIX J. CATENA Montgomery County Juror Questions

Hon. CHERYL CHAMBERS Kings County Voir Dire

Hon. MARGARET CLANCY Bronx County Jury Instructions, Order of Trial

Hon. RALPH COSTELLO Suffolk County Alternatives to Trial

HON. WILLIAM C. DONNINO\* Queens County Jury Instructions, Order of Trial

Hon. VINCENT E. DOYLE Niagara County Note-taking, Notebooks

Hon. PAUL FEINMAN New York County Alternatives to Trial Hon. Nicholas Figueroa New York County Note-taking, Notebooks

Hon. Steven Fisher Appellate Division Jury Instructions, Order of Trial

Hon. MARIANNE FURFURE Steuben County Jury Instructions, Order of Trial

Hon. JOSEPH GERACE\* Chautauqua County Alternatives to Trial

Hon. WILMA GUZMAN\* Bronx County Note-taking, Notebooks

Hon. Roger Hayes New York County Voir Dire

Hon. JOHN LANE Erie County Juror Questions

Hon. KENNETH LANGE\* Westchester County Note-taking, Notebooks

Hon. JUDITH LIEB Bronx County Juror Questions

Hon MICHAEL MCKEON Cayuga County Juror Questions

Hon. DEBORAH MODICA Queens County Voir Dire

HON. KARLA MOSKOWITZ\* New York County Alternatives to Trial

Hon. ROBERT MULVEY Tompkins County Alternatives to Trial

Hon. WILLIAM O'BRIEN\* Nassau County Voir Dire

Hon. Geoffrey O'Connell Nassau County Voir Dire

Hon. THOMAS V. POLIZZI Queens County Alternatives to Trial

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Hon. JOSEPH D. VALENTINO Monroe County Note-taking, Notebooks

Hon. PAUL VICTOR Bronx County Jury Instructions, Order of Trial

Hon. WILLIAM WETZEL New York County

Hon. F. DANA WINSLOW\* Nassau County Juror Questions

#### \* COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR

Staff to the Jury Trial Project, Elissa Krauss, Office of Court Research, (212) 428-2990, ekrauss@courts.state.ny.us

Jury Resources

#### **NEW YORK STATE**

For further information about the Jury Trial Project and to view its complete report go to: HTTP://WWW.NYJURYINNOVATIONS.ORG

Uniform Rules for Instruction and Deliberation - Rules concerning nondesignated alternates, juror note-taking, judge's charge to deliberating jury in civil cases, juror notebooks.

HTTP://WWW.COURTS.STATE.NY.US/RULES/TRIALCOURTS/220.SHTML

Uniform Rules for Supreme and County Court - Conduct of the Voir Dire HTTP://WWW.COURTS.STATE.NY.US/RULES/TRIALCOURTS/202.SHTML#33

#### **GENERAL JURY RESOURCES**

American Bar Association Principles Related to Juries and JuryTrials (2005) HTTP://WWW.ABANET.ORG/JURY/PRINCIPLES.HTML

American Judicature Society National Jury Center HTTP://WWW.AJS.ORG/JC/INDEX.ASP

National Studies for State Courts Center for Jury Studies HTTP://WWW.NCSCONLINE.ORG/JURIES/HOME.HTM



### JURY TRIAL INNOVATIONS IN NEW YORK STATE

For further information: www.nyjuryinnovations.org

For general jury information: www.nyjuror.gov 1-800-nyjuror 1-800-695-8767