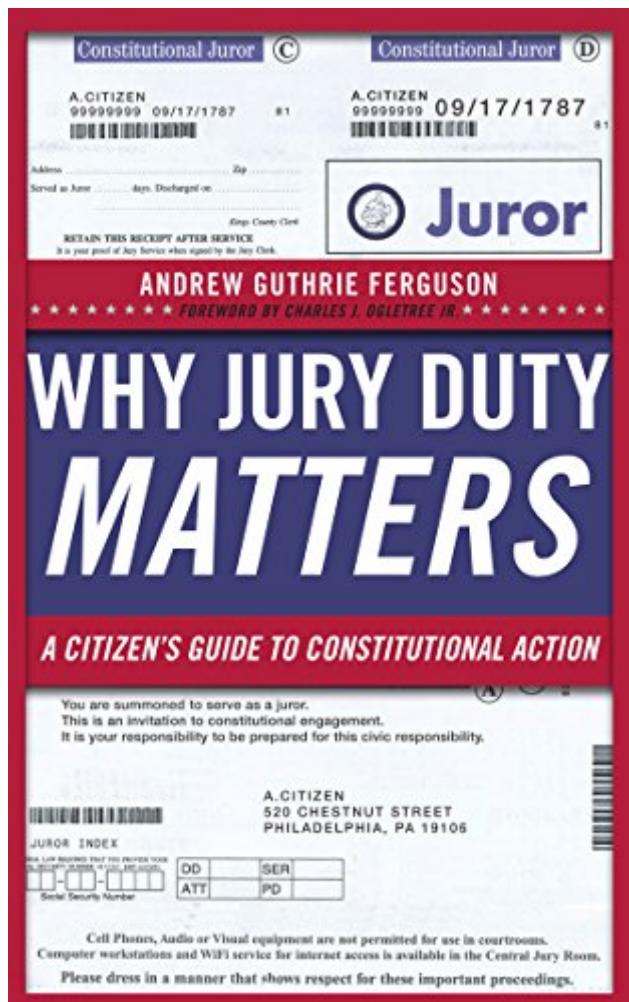


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# Why Jury Duty Matters: A Citizenâ€™s Guide To Constitutional Action



## **Synopsis**

It's easy to forget how important the jury really is to America. The right to be a juror is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed to all eligible citizens. The right to trial by jury helped spark the American Revolution, was quickly adopted at the Constitutional Convention, and is the only right that appears in both the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. But for most of us, a jury summons is an unwelcome inconvenience. Who has time for jury duty? We have things to do. In *Why Jury Duty Matters*, Andrew Guthrie Ferguson reminds us that whether we like it or not, we are all constitutional actors. Jury duty provides an opportunity to reflect on that constitutional responsibility. Combining American history, constitutional law, and personal experience, the book engages citizens in the deeper meaning of jury service. Interweaving constitutional principles into the actual jury experience, this book is a handbook for those Americans who want to enrich the jury experience. It seeks to reconnect ordinary citizens to the constitutional character of a nation by focusing on the important, and largely ignored, democratic lessons of the jury. Jury duty is a shared American tradition. It connects people across class and race, creates habits of focus and purpose, and teaches values of participation, equality, and deliberation. We know that juries are important for courts, but we don't know that jury service is important for democracy. This book inspires us to re-examine the jury experience and act on the constitutional principles that guide our country before, during, and after jury service.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Even though most Americans seem to groan at the thought of a jury summons arriving in the mail, most seem to appreciate the importance of the role of the jury in the justice system and consider it important. In *Why Jury Duty Matters*, the author explains the origins, purpose, and importance of the jury in modern America. The book is mainly a guide to educate Americans on why they should take jury duty seriously and its importance in the judiciary. He lays out several arguments in favor of the jury trial. For example, he notes that judges and lawyers often become used to the courtroom and the day-to-day realities of the job, but for each and every trial, the jury is unique. Each jury can take on a fresh look at the case when rendering a verdict. The main purpose of juries is to form a check on state power by giving average citizens the ultimate power to give a judgment in a trial. The book notes that jurors usually work hard to come to a fair conclusion and how multiple personalities offer different viewpoints on the same subject. The author notes that historically the jury system was subject to issues. Especially in southern states, African Americans were often denied the right to serve on juries and, conversely, all-white juries would sometimes unfairly convict innocent blacks of crimes. Women were often denied the right to serve on juries as well for some time. The author notes that even today the jury system, like any other human institution, is not perfect and sometimes comes up with disagreeable results. Nevertheless, he offers much praise for the institution and how it offers average Americans a role to play in government. I found this book to be an interesting overview of the importance of jury service. This is a good book for Americans to read to remind them of its importance and hopefully foster a greater respect for those that serve on juries.

Andrew Ferguson's "Why Jury Duty Matters" is a call to jury service! The book is clear, informative, and inspiring. It is a good read for anyone who is about to be called for jury duty, for anyone interested in the jury system, and for anyone interested in the law and history. I particularly enjoyed the format of the book as well as the pictures and quotes that begin each chapter. I am a law professor and intend to assign Ferguson's book to my students. I also bought it for my dad (a non-lawyer) when he received a summons for jury duty. My dad has thoroughly enjoyed reading the book and it has made him even more excited to serve. I wish all potential jurors could have the

benefit of Ferguson's explanation of our Constitution, our jury system, and our shared civic responsibility. Thank you for writing this book!

**\*\*DISCLAIMER\*\***I was a law student at the school where Professor Ferguson teaches, and had him as a professor twice. **Review:**As mentioned above, I had Professor Ferguson as a professor. I say now what I said in my class surveys: he should teach everyone. Professor Ferguson's common sense approach in explaining complex issues is second to none. Imagine watching the news, and actually getting a unbiased opinion, this is what you will get from "Why Jury Duty Matters." In his book a lot of his classroom lectures come through the lines. This isn't to say that I didn't appreciate hearing the words again, but rather, to underline the fact that this book should be purchased by anyone who has an interest in learning the reasons why jury duty (often overlooked) is so important. As a reader, I would compare it to Paul Butlers "Let's Get Free: A Hip-Hop Theory of Justice" and/or Erwin Chemerinsky's "The Conservative Attack on the Constitution." The only criticism that I have is that the book doesn't cover all the topics which Professor Ferguson has published on; the greater population would benefit from having a matter-of-fact-easy-to-understand publication on all of them.

When I got a notice to report for jury duty in Washington, DC Superior Court I of course dreaded the prospect of sitting around all day with a bunch of strangers. And with the District one day or one trial I was also hoping not to be selected for a jury. I decided to get this book to read. It had an interesting title and while I kind of knew why it mattered I had the day so why not read the book. It was an eye opening book. I recommend that every US citizen read this book or at the very least they make copies of this book available in every jury waiting room in the country. The author brings to crystal clarity the historical context of our jury system and why it needs to be held in very high esteem by everyone. There are many things we take for granted as citizens in this country and our freedom is one. I was in the military and I vote every election, but jury duty is a life long commitment to our mutual freedom. It is how the common person gets to say about someone's freedom or if someone is liable for damages. I can say that I read the book in one day and sent my copy to the Chief Justice, Satterfield, of DC Superior Court for his reading pleasure.

I bought the book out of curiosity, as I had impending jury duty. I wasn't exactly looking forward to it (the jury duty or the book), but Ferguson's wit and style are compelling and it turns out there are really meaty issues at play. I know I'll enjoy my jury duty now, however strange that sounds, and I

actually feel like a more useful citizen. Only issue: my view is that if your middle name is Guthrie, you just keep that a secret. G is a perfectly fine initial.

If you show up for jury service and get on the jury, this will likely be the most powerful political position you will hold in your entire life. This book will prepare you for this awesome civic responsibility.

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