

Chapter 9.

Jurors.

Article 1.

Jury Commissions, Preparation of Jury Lists, and Drawing of Panels.

§ 9-1. Jury commission in each county; membership; selection; oath; terms; expenses of jury system.

Not later than July 1, 1967, there shall be appointed in each county a jury commission of three members. One member of the commission shall be appointed by the senior regular resident superior court judge, one member by the clerk of superior court, and one member by the board of county commissioners. The appointees shall be qualified voters of the county, and shall serve for terms of two years. Appointees may be reappointed to successive terms. A vacancy in the commission shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointment, for the unexpired term. Each commissioner shall take an oath or affirmation that, without favor or prejudice, he will honestly perform the duties of a member of the jury commission during his term of service. The compensation of commissioners shall be fixed by the board of county commissioners, and shall be paid from the general fund of the county. All expenses necessary to carry out the provisions of this Chapter and to administer the jury system, including all data processing, document processing, supplies, postage, and other similar expenses, except as otherwise provided in this Chapter, shall be paid from the general fund of the county, except that the clerk of superior court shall furnish clerical or other personnel assistance, as the commission may reasonably require. (1967, c. 218, s. 1; 1981, c. 720, s. 3; 1991, c. 729, s. 1.)

§ 9-2. Preparation of master jury list; sources of names.

(a) It shall be the duty of the jury commission during every odd-numbered year to prepare a master list of prospective jurors qualified under this Chapter to serve in the biennium beginning on January 1 of the next year. Instead of providing a master list for an entire biennium, the commission may prepare a master list each year if the senior regular resident superior court judge requests in writing that it do so.

(b) In preparing the master list, the jury commission shall use the list of registered voters and persons with drivers license records supplied to the county by the Commissioner of Motor Vehicles pursuant to G.S. 20-43.4. The commission may use fewer than all the names from the list if it uses a random method of selection. The commission may use other sources of names deemed by it to be reliable.

(c), (d) Repealed by Session Laws 2003-226, s. 7(d), effective January 1, 2004.

(e) The jury commission shall merge the entire list of names of each source used and randomly select the desired number of names to form the master list.

(f) The master list shall contain not less than one and one-quarter times and not more than three times as many names as were drawn for jury duty in all courts in the county during the previous biennium, or, if an annual list is being prepared as requested under subsection (a) of this section the master list shall contain not less than one and one-quarter times and not more than three times as many names as were drawn for jury duty in all courts in the county during the previous year but in no event shall the list include fewer than 500 names, except that in counties in which a different panel of jurors is selected for each day of the week, there is no limit to the number of names that may be placed on the master list.

(g) Repealed by Session Laws 2003-226, s. 7(d), effective January 1, 2004.

(h) As used in this section "random" or "randomly" refers to a method of selection that results in each name on a list having an equal opportunity to be selected.

(i) To facilitate random selection of jurors, all the names on the master list may be sorted into random order before the first panel is drawn. Thereafter, names may be selected sequentially from the randomized list without further randomization, except as required by G.S. 15A-1214.

(j) The procedure for performing the preparation of the master list shall be in writing, adopted by the jury commission, and kept available for public inspection in the office of the clerk of court. The procedure must effectively preserve the authorized grounds for disqualification, the right of public access to the master list of prospective jurors as provided by G.S. 9-4, and the time sequence for drawing and summoning a jury panel.

(k) In counties utilizing electronic data processing equipment, the functions of preparing and maintaining custody of the master list of prospective jurors, the procedure for drawing and summoning panels of jurors, and the procedure for maintaining records of names of jurors who have served, been excused or disqualified, or whose service has been deferred may be performed by this equipment, except that decisions as to mental or physical competence of prospective jurors shall continue to be made by jury commissioners. (1806, c. 694, P.R.; Code, ss. 1722, 1723; 1889, c. 559; 1897, cc. 117, 539; 1899, c. 729; Rev., s. 1957; C.S., s. 2312; 1947, c. 1007, s. 1; 1967, c. 218, s. 1; 1969, c. 205, s. 1; c. 1190, s. 49½; 1973, c. 83, ss. 1, 2; 1981, c. 430, s. 1; c. 720, s. 1; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1226, s. 1; 1983, c. 197, s. 2; 2003-226, s. 7(d); 2007-512, s. 1; 2012-180, s. 1.)

§ 9-2.1: Repealed by Session Laws 2012-180, s. 2, effective July 12, 2012.

§ 9-3. Qualifications of prospective jurors.

(a) A person is qualified to serve as a juror and shall be included on the master jury list if the person meets all of the following:

- (1) Is a citizen of the United States.
- (2) Is a resident of the State.
- (3) Is a resident of the county.
- (4) Has not served as a juror during the preceding two years.
- (5) Has not served a full term of service as a grand juror during the preceding six years.
- (6) Is 18 years of age or over.
- (7) Is physically and mentally competent.
- (8) Can understand the English language.
- (9) Has not been convicted of a felony or pleaded guilty or nolo contendere to an indictment charging a felony, or if convicted of a felony or having plead guilty or nolo contendere to an indictment charging a felony, has had that person's citizenship restored pursuant to law.
- (10) Has not been adjudged non compos mentis.

(b) A person not qualified under this section is subject to challenge for cause. (1806, c. 694, P.R.; Code, ss. 1722, 1723; 1889, c. 559; 1897, cc. 117, 539; 1899, c. 729; Rev., s. 1957; C.S., s. 2312; 1947, c. 1007, s. 1; 1967, c. 218, s. 1; 1971, c. 1231, s. 1; 1973, c. 230, ss. 1, 2; 1977, c. 711, s. 10; 2011-42, s. 1; 2012-180, s. 3; 2013-148, s. 1; 2023-140, s. 44(a).)

§ 9-4. Preparation and custody of alphabetized list; access to list.

(a) As the master jury list is prepared, the name of each qualified person selected for the list shall be recorded and alphabetically arranged. The alphabetized list shall be maintained in the office of the clerk of court, together with a statement of the sources used and procedures followed in preparing the list. The alphabetized list shall be kept under lock and key, but shall be available for public inspection during regular office hours. The clerk of court may elect to store an electronic copy of the alphabetized list for the county.

(b) Public access to juror information shall be limited to the alphabetized list of the names. The addresses and dates of birth of prospective jurors are confidential and not subject to disclosure without an order of the court. (1967, c. 218, s. 1; 1969, c. 205, s. 2; 2009-518, s. 1; 2012-18, s. 1.1; 2012-180, s. 4; 2013-166, s. 2.)

§ 9-5. Procedure for drawing panel of jurors.

At least 30 days prior to any session or sessions of superior or district court requiring a jury, the clerk of superior court or assistant or deputy clerk shall prepare or have electronically prepared a randomized list of names from the master jury list equal to the number of jurors required for the session or sessions scheduled. The clerk of superior court may decrease the number of randomized names to account for the addition of names of previously selected jurors whose service has been deferred to this session. For each week of a superior court session, the senior resident superior court judge for the district or set of districts as defined in G.S. 7A-41.1(a) in which the county is located shall specify the number of jurors to be drawn. For each week of a district court jury session, the chief district judge of the district court district in which the county is located shall specify the number of jurors to be drawn. Pooling of jurors between or among concurrent sessions of various courts is authorized in the discretion of the senior regular resident superior court judge. When pooling is utilized, the senior regular resident superior court judge, after consultation with the chief district judge when a district court jury is required, shall specify the total number of jurors to be drawn for such concurrent sessions. When grand jurors are needed, at least nine additional names shall be drawn.

The clerk of superior court shall either (i) prepare and issue the summonses or (ii) deliver the printed summonses or the list of names and addresses of jurors to the sheriff, who shall issue the summonses in accordance with the provisions of G.S. 9-10(a). The persons so summoned may serve as jurors in either the superior or the district court, or both, for the week for which summoned. Jurors who serve each week shall be discharged at the close of the weekly session or sessions, unless actually engaged in the trial of a case, and then they shall not be discharged until their service in that case is completed. (1806, c. 694, P.R.; 1868-9, c. 9, ss. 5, 6; c. 175; Code, ss. 1726, 1727, 1731; 1889, c. 559; 1897, c. 117; 1901, c. 28, s. 3; c. 636; 1903, c. 11; 1905, c. 38; c. 76, s. 4; c. 285; Rev., ss. 1958, 1959; C.S., ss. 2313, 2314; 1967, c. 218, s. 1; 1969, c. 205, s. 3; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 38; 2012-180, s. 5.)

§ 9-6. Jury service a public duty; excuses to be allowed in exceptional cases; procedure.

(a) The General Assembly hereby declares the public policy of this State to be that jury service is the solemn obligation of all qualified citizens, and that excuses from the discharge of this responsibility should be granted only for reasons of compelling personal hardship or because requiring service would be contrary to the public welfare, health, or safety.

(a1) All applications for excuses from jury duty, including applications based on disqualification under G.S. 9-3, shall be made on a form developed and furnished by the

Administrative Office of the Courts. Applications shall allow prospective jurors to specify the reason for excusal based on disqualification, including lack of United States citizenship.

(b) Pursuant to the foregoing policy, each chief district court judge shall promulgate procedures whereby the chief district court judge or any district court judge of the chief district court judge's district court district designated by the chief district court judge, prior to the date that a jury session (or sessions) of superior or district court convenes, shall receive, hear, and pass on applications for excuses from jury duty. The procedures shall provide for the time and place, publicly announced, at which applications for excuses will be heard, and prospective jurors who have been summoned for service shall be so informed. The chief district court judge, after consultation with and with the consent of the clerk of superior court, may delegate the authority to receive, hear, and pass on applications for excuses from jury duty to the clerk of superior court. The chief district judge may also assign the duty of passing on applications for excuses from jury service to judicial support staff, or may, with the clerk's consent, delegate that authority to the clerk of superior court. In all cases concerning excuses, the clerk of superior court or judicial support staff shall notify prospective jurors of the disposition of their excuses.

(b1) A prospective juror who is summoned for jury service in a session of court scheduled during a period of time when the prospective juror is taking classes or exams as a full-time student enrolled at an out-of-state postsecondary public or private educational institution, including any out-of-state trade or professional institution, college, or university, shall be excused from jury service upon request made pursuant to G.S. 9-6.1(a) and supported by documentation showing enrollment at the out-of-state educational institution.

(c) A prospective juror excused by a judge in the exercise of the discretion conferred by subsection (b) of this section or excused pursuant to subsection (b1) of this section may be required by the judge to serve as a juror in a subsequent session of court. If required to serve subsequently, the juror shall be considered on such occasion the same as if he were a member of the panel regularly summoned for jury service at that time.

(d) A judge hearing applications for excuses from jury duty shall excuse any person disqualified under § 9-3.

(e) The judge shall inform the clerk of superior court of persons excused under this section, and the clerk of superior court shall keep a record of excuses separate from the master jury list in accordance with G.S. 9-6.2.

(f) The discretionary authority of a presiding judge to excuse a juror at the beginning of or during a session of court is not affected by this section. (1967, c. 218, s. 1; 1969, c. 205, ss. 4, 5; 1971, c. 377, s. 30; 1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1207, s. 1; 1981, c. 430, s. 2; 1985, c. 609, s. 2; 1987 (Reg. Sess., 1988), c. 1037, s. 47; 2012-180, s. 6; 2015-210, s. 2; 2022-47, s. 10(a); 2023-103, s. 8(a); 2023-140, s. 44(b).)

§ 9-6.1. Requests to be excused.

(a) Any person summoned as a juror who is a full-time student and who wishes to be excused pursuant to G.S. 9-6(b1) or who is 72 years or older and who wishes to be excused, deferred, or exempted, may make the request without appearing in person by filing a signed statement of the grounds for the request with the chief district court judge of that district, or the district court judge, clerk of superior court, or judicial support staff member, if so designated by the chief district court judge pursuant to G.S. 9-6(b), at any time five business days before the date the person is summoned to appear.

(b) Any person summoned as a juror who has a disability that could interfere with the person's ability to serve as a juror and who wishes to be excused, deferred, or exempted may make the request without appearing in person by filing a signed statement of the ground of the request, including a brief explanation of the disability that interferes with the person's ability to serve as a juror, with the chief district court judge of that district, or the district court judge, clerk of superior court, or judicial support staff member, if so designated by the chief district court judge pursuant to G.S. 9-6(b), at any time five business days before the date the person is summoned to appear. At the request of the court, medical documentation of any disability may be submitted. Any privileged medical information or protected health information described in this section is confidential and is exempt from the provisions of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes or any other provision requiring information and records held by State agencies to be made public or accessible to the public.

(c) A person may request either a temporary or permanent exemption under this section, and the judge, clerk of superior court, or judicial support staff member may accept or reject either in the exercise of discretion conferred by G.S. 9-6(b), including the substitution of a temporary exemption for a requested permanent exemption. In the case of supplemental jurors summoned under G.S. 9-11, notice may be given when summoned. In case the chief district court judge, or the judge, clerk of superior court, or judicial support staff member designated by the chief district court judge pursuant to G.S. 9-6(b), rejects the request for exemption, the prospective juror shall be immediately notified by the judicial support staff member or the clerk of court by telephone, letter, or personally. (1979, 2nd Sess., c. 1207, s. 2; 1981, c. 9, ss. 1, 2; c. 430, ss. 4, 5; 2005-149, s. 1; 2011-42, s. 2; 2012-180, s. 7; 2015-210, s. 3; 2022-47, s. 10(b); 2023-103, s. 8(b); 2023-140, s. 44(c).)

§ 9-6.2. Reports of excusals from jury duty based on disqualification.

(a) The name and address provided by each person who requests to be excused from jury duty on the basis that the person is not qualified to serve as a juror, along with the reason for that request, shall be retained by the clerk of superior court for the remainder of the biennium as described in G.S. 9-2. The records retained by the clerk are not public records under G.S. 132-1. The clerk of superior court may destroy the records at the end of each biennium as described in G.S. 9-2.

(b) The clerk of superior court shall, at least on a schedule as determined by the State Board of Elections, communicate information regarding requests to be excused from jury duty on the basis that the person is not a citizen of the United States to the State Board of Elections, including the person's name, address, date of birth, and other personal information from the master jury list, along with the reasons for the person's disqualification and the date of disqualification. The State Board of Elections shall use this information to conduct list maintenance efforts in accordance with G.S. 163-82.14. The list of persons requesting to be disqualified from jury duty due to lack of being a citizen of the United States shall be a public record, subject to G.S. 163-82.10(a1).

(c) Nothing in this section shall be construed as a restriction on the authority of a local board of elections or the State Board of Elections to determine a person's eligibility to vote. (2023-140, s. 44(d).)

§ 9-7. Notation on master jury list of names of jurors who have served; retention.

(a) The names of persons summoned for jury service and the date or dates on which each person served shall be noted on the master jury list. This information shall be retained for two years, and persons shall be exempt from jury service for a period of two years from the date on

which they were discharged from their prior service, except as provided in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) The names of persons summoned for jury service who served a full term on the grand jury pursuant to G.S. 15A-622, the date or dates on which each person served, and a notation that the person served the full term of service as a grand juror shall be noted on the master list. This information shall be retained for six years, and persons shall be exempt from jury service for a period of six years from the date on which they were discharged from their prior service. (1967, c. 218, s. 1; 2012-180, s. 8; 2013-148, s. 2.)

§ 9-7.1. Judicial support staff may assist clerk with performance of duties.

(a) Upon the request of the clerk of superior court and with the agreement of the clerk of superior court and the senior resident superior court judge, the duties and responsibilities of the clerk of superior court under this Article may be assigned to judicial support staff.

(b) For purposes of this Article, "judicial support staff" shall mean employees of the Judicial Branch who provide case management and administrative support under the authority of a judge, including court assistants, court coordinators, court managers, and court administrators. It shall not include employees of the Clerk of Superior Court. (2012-180, s. 10; 2022-47, s. 10(c).)

§§ 9-8 through 9-9. Repealed by Session Laws 1967, c. 218, s. 1.