

WHY WE NEED JURIES

Every day in courtrooms across the country, real issues are being addressed by the collective wisdom and will of The People. Small groups of average citizens, (6, 7 or 12) are given the opportunity to deliberate and resolve legal disputes. The People often decide issues of significant importance to the entire community: where a pipeline begins and property rights end; whether law enforcement acted brutally; how to compensate, or not, for injury. The jury is therefore democracy in action.

Our Founders intended this, solidifying the fundamental rights to a grand, criminal, and civil jury in the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Amendments respectively. They believed, and history has shown, that average citizens called upon to do their civic duty can protect our society against overzealous prosecutions, unfair laws, and bring the community's voice to matters affecting our daily lives and the lives of our neighbors and businesses as well.

Unfortunately, there is a crisis brewing of which most people are unaware. Beneath the bigger headlines of markets and terrorism, the right guaranteed by our Seventh Amendment that empowers members of the community to resolve private disputes is eroding. The use of juries in civil trials has fallen dramatically over the last few decades to the point that today juries decide only about one percent of all civil cases. This fundamental right that serves to protect citizens and business alike must not be lost. It is up to citizens in each of our communities to reclaim this right and make sure we pass this on to the generations to come.

The opportunity to flex your democratic muscles in the jury box comes far more often than the biennial ballot box. The right to take back whatever power citizens believe they have lost to control their own destinies and the future of their communities is waiting for them in every jury summons that goes out. It is up to you to come to the courthouse, to strengthen your community, and make your voice heard in our jury system.