

Jury Pool Expands Due To New State Law

June 28, 2012

On May 3, Governor Deal signed H.B. 415, also known as the Jury Composition Reform Act of 2011, into law. This involves a major overhaul of Georgia's jury system and will expand the local jury pool to include every eligible citizen.

Georgia was the only state remaining that required forced balancing of jury pools by local jury commissioners to ensure the pools represented a fair cross-section of local demographics. The new system is designed to eliminate any opportunity for discrimination, because every resident who is eligible will be in the pool. According to Charles Baker, Hall County Clerk of Court, every resident who is at least 18 years old and is a citizen of the county who votes or has a driver's license will be eligible for jury duty beginning July 1, 2012.

'The changes will also allow grand jurors to be picked from the same pool as trial jurors,' Baker said.

After July 1, the role of the jury commission will be to approve jurors' requests for permanent excusal from jury service. By law, those reasons include death, nonresidency and permanent medical and/or mental infirmities attested to by a medical doctor and/or psychologist or psychiatrist. Individuals who are convicted felons who have not had their civil rights restored automatically are disqualified from jury service.

Baker said that with the change, a new jury list will be created for Hall County that will not contain all historical information about jurors, such as medical or legal reasons as to why someone was previously removed from the Hall County jury list. Baker said if someone who was previously removed is summoned, all he/she needs to do is call the Clerk's Office at 770-531-7048 so the new list can be updated.