



Charleston County News Release – **MEDIA INVITATION**

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Charleston County and U.S. Postal Service Celebrate New Jury Duty Postage Stamp

FOR MEDIA USE ONLY: Download the image of the Jury Duty postage stamp at:
<http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/2007stamps/downloads/newrates/USPS07STA013.jpg> (see bottom of news release for U.S. Postal Service stamp reproduction guidelines)

What: Charleston County's Court system will hold a ceremony in front of a newly qualified jury panel on Monday, Sept. 17, to celebrate the U.S. Postal Service's (USPS) release of its new jury duty stamp. The USPS will officially release the stamp on Wednesday, Sept. 12. However, in order to celebrate the occasion on a local level, the stamp will be unveiled on Monday, Sept. 17, in front of a newly selected a jury panel in Charleston.

Julie Armstrong, Charleston County Clerk of Court, and 9th Circuit Court Judge Thomas Hughston will make brief remarks about the importance of jury service.



Tim Shaw, the Postmaster of Charleston, will be present to represent the USPS and to participate in the ceremony. Shaw oversees postal services in numerous municipalities throughout Charleston, Berkeley and Dorchester Counties.

A large printout of the stamp will be displayed on an easel to show the jury members. Charleston County's court system will use the stamps to mail the paychecks to jurors at the conclusion of their week of work.

When: Monday, Sept. 17, at 11 a.m.

Where: Jury Assembly Room on the second floor of the Charleston Judicial Center (100 Broad Street; Charleston, SC, 29401; (843) 958-5000)

Background: With the release of the jury duty stamp on Sept. 12, the USPS calls attention to the importance of jury service, a cornerstone of democracy in the United States. The U.S. Constitution guarantees citizens charged in criminal cases the right to trial by a jury of their peers. In civil cases, the jury manifests the conscience of the community, ruling for either of the opposing parties in a dispute. The jury duty stamp image presents a diverse group of 12 representative jurors in silhouette.

SIDEBAR: Stamp Recognizes Importance of Jury Duty

Source: U.S. Postal Service Web site:

<http://www.usps.com/communications/newsroom/2007stamps>

With this stamp, the U.S. Postal Service calls attention to the importance of jury service. This essential obligation, shared by all eligible citizens, is a cornerstone of democracy in the United States. By showing a diverse group of twelve representative jurors in silhouette, art director Carl

T. Herrman and stamp designer Lance Hidy emphasize that under the U.S. Constitution, the American jury system guarantees citizens the right to a trial by a jury of their peers.

Generally, in criminal cases, 12 jurors stand between the accused and the power of the government. Unless the government convinces a jury of the accused person's guilt — beyond a reasonable doubt — it may not deprive a citizen of life, liberty, or property. In civil cases, a jury represents the conscience of the larger community, ruling in favor of either of the opposing parties in a dispute.

An important basis of the American jury system can be found in legal procedures established in medieval England during the rule of King Henry II. At that time, new legal actions known as "assizes" brought 12 local men together to resolve questions over ownership and inheritance. A forerunner of today's grand jury was introduced in 1166, when panels of "lawful men" were required under oath to identify anyone in their community who was suspected of a crime.

In 1215, King John signed the Magna Carta, subjecting the monarch to the rule of law. The Magna Carta declared that "no freeman shall be taken or imprisoned ... except by the lawful judgment of his peers or by the law of the land."

Records show that English juries were often reluctant to convict accused felons in less serious cases, given the customary penalty of death. In this way, juries acquired the reputation of being protectors of individual liberty. Until 1825, the English government could in turn deprive jurors of their property and liberty if it determined they had returned an "untrue" verdict.

In the American colonies, juries showed their reluctance to convict under oppressive British laws. In New York, for example, when publisher John Peter Zenger was put on trial for printing articles critical of a colonial official, a jury acquitted him. The British retaliated against American juries by setting up special courts in which jury trials were not used. The Declaration of Independence contains a complaint against the British king "for depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury."

Writers have capitalized on the inherent drama of the jury system in a variety of creative works such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Twelve Angry Men*. Jury service remains a vital facet of American democracy.

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