

**Minutes**  
**Connecticut Judicial Branch Jury Selection Task Force**  
**July 14, 2020**  
**2:00**

**Meeting held remotely using Microsoft Teams**

The Connecticut Judicial Branch Jury Selection Task Force held its first meeting on July 14, 2020 remotely using Microsoft Teams. The meeting was also available for live streaming on the Judicial Branch YouTube Channel.

**Members in attendance:** Hon. Chase T. Rogers (Co-Chair), Hon. Omar A. Williams (Co-Chair), Hon. James W. Abrams, Hon. Joan K. Alexander, Hon. David P. Gold, Hon. Joette Katz, Hon. Douglas Lavine, State Rep. Matthew Blumenthal, Atty. Tais C. Ericson, Ms. Esther Harris, Atty. Erik T. Lohr, Atty. Christine Perra Rapillo, Atty. Preston Tisdale, Atty. Harry Weller, Atty. Paul D. Williams, Prof. Neal Feigenson, Tobechukwu L. Umeugo, Dean Timothy Fisher, Hannah Kogan, Atty. Aigné Goldsby, Atty. James J. Healy, Atty. Claire M. Howard, Hon. Robin L. Wilson, Atty. Charleen E. Merced Agosto, Atty. Anna Van Cleave, Atty. Glenn B. Coffin, Atty. William M. Bloss, Atty. Daniel Krisch, Atty. Michael J. Walsh, Atty. Molly Arabolos, Atty. Sheila Sinha Charmoy

**Also in attendance:** Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson; Judge Patrick L. Carroll III, Chief Court Administrator

- I. **Welcome:** Judge Omar A. Williams, Co-Chair delivered opening remarks to the Task Force. He noted that the three co-equal branches of government are somewhat reactive at their core, with the Judicial Branch being perhaps the most reactive. Courts rule on cases before them and tailor their resolution to only the matters presented in those cases. Further, judges are neutral and objective arbiters of the law. Ethical rules, however, allow judges to “promote access to justice for all.” To that end, at times the State Supreme Court is compelled to use its supervisory authority to bring about systemic change in order to uphold the ideal of “access to justice for all.” Judge Williams summarized State v. Holmes, 334 Conn. 202, noting that the Connecticut Supreme Court, in its decision, went on to create this Jury Selection Task Force. In the Holmes decision, Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson, writing for the Court, explained that the Court is unanimous in its commitment to eradicate racial bias from the jury system. Judge Williams stated that he and former Chief Justice Chase Rogers are proud to serve as Co-Chairs of the Task Force.

Judge Williams then introduced Chief Justice Richard A. Robinson. Referring to the Judicial Branch’s Strategic Plan’s value statement on fairness, which states the Judicial Branch embodies fairness through equal and impartial treatment of all people. It is a core value of the Judicial Branch that all its members treat every person equally without bias or favoritism. He asked the Task Force members to give teeth to the Batson decision. Justice Robinson recounted a personal experience from his time in practice in which race played an implicit role in jury selection. Justice Robinson described the composition of the Task Force, noting the diversity not only of race, ethnicity and gender, but also of mind, which brings added credibility to the Task Force because not everyone shares the same ideas on how to address the problem. Justice Robinson asked the members to look at the importance of the mission they have been asked to achieve, to do their best on this difficult task, and he expressed his support for them.

Next, Judge Williams noted that Chief Court Administrator, Hon. Patrick L. Carroll, III was present and thanked him for attending.

- II. **Introduction of Task Force Members:** Task Force members introduced themselves beginning with Former Chief Justice Chase T. Rogers, Co-Chair. Justice Rogers expressed her support for Task Force and indicated that for her the mission is clear – why is the minority community under-represented and what can be done to fix it. She commented that she appreciates everyone’s willingness to serve. All members present briefly introduced themselves.
- III. **Jury Administration Overview:** Esther Harris, Deputy Director of Jury Administration provided an overview of jury administration using a PowerPoint presentation. Statutory sections covering qualifications of jurors and preparation of the master file were reviewed. Examples of the summons for jury service and confidential juror questionnaire were shown. Summonses are mailed eight weeks in advance of the jury selection date. It was noted that the race and ethnicity question on the confidential juror questionnaire is optional, not mandatory. Disqualifications, postponements, hardships, and how to confirm the date of jury service were reviewed. Statistics on juror utilization for 2019 were presented. A new, fully integrated jury management system is planned. This new system is expected to improve efficiency and juror yield.
- IV. **Subcommittees:** Attorney Tais C. Ericson, Executive Director, Court Operations, reviewed the 4 subcommittees and the role of the support staff assigned to each subcommittee. She noted that there is a short timeframe – January 2021 – for the full Task Force and each subcommittee to complete their work. Members were asked to indicate their preference of subcommittee assignment on a form provided. It is anticipated that each member will serve on one subcommittee. Since the meeting, subcommittees have been formed and members notified. Dates for meetings of the full Task Force have been set. Subcommittee meeting dates will be set before the first meeting.

Judge Williams, Co-Chair, also noted the short timeframe and that there is an opportunity to produce ambitious recommendations and affect real change. Justice Rogers, Co-Chair, explained that January 2021 was chosen so that any recommendations approved by the Chief Justice can be sent to the legislature. The members were thanked for responding enthusiastically to serving on the Task Force even after the delay in starting due to Covid.

- V. **Adjourn:** Meeting adjourned at 2:51pm. Next Task Force meeting is scheduled for August 18, 2020 at 2:00 pm using Microsoft Teams.