

House Bill 1078

By: Representatives Kelley of the 16th, Atwood of the 179th, and Willard of the 51st

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 12 of Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
2 juries, so as to clarify provisions relating to juries; to revise definitions; to change provisions
3 relating to choosing grand jurors; to provide for concurrent grand juries; to provide for a
4 preliminary oath to be administered to grand juries; to change provisions relating to when
5 there are insufficient persons to complete a panel of grand jurors; to provide for related
6 matters; to provide for an effective date; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

7 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

8 **SECTION 1.**

9 Chapter 12 of Title 15 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to juries, is
10 amended by revising paragraphs (5), (10), and (11) of Code Section 15-12-1, relating to
11 definitions, as follows:

12 "(5) 'County master jury list' means a list compiled by the council of names of persons,
13 including their addresses, city of residence, dates of birth, and gender, eligible for trial,
14 grand, or other jury service."

15 "(10) 'State-wide master jury list' means a comprehensive master list that identifies every
16 person of this state who can be determined to be prima facie qualified to serve as a trial,
17 grand, or other juror.

18 (11) 'Venire' means the list of persons summoned to serve as trial, grand, or other jurors
19 for a particular term of court."

20 **SECTION 2.**

21 Said chapter is further amended by revising paragraph (1) of subsection (a) of Code Section
22 15-12-1.1, relating to exemptions from jury duty, as follows:

23 "(a)(1) Any person who shows that he or she will be engaged during his or her term of
24 jury duty as a trial or grand juror in work necessary to the public health, safety, or good
25 order or who shows other good cause why he or she should be exempt from jury duty

26 may have his or her jury service deferred or excused by the judge of the court to which
 27 he or she has been summoned or by some other person who has been duly appointed by
 28 order of the chief judge to excuse jurors. Such a person may exercise such authority only
 29 after the establishment by court order of guidelines governing excuses. Any order of
 30 appointment shall provide that, except for permanently mentally or physically disabled
 31 persons, all excuses shall be deferred to a date and time certain within that term or the
 32 next succeeding term or shall be deferred as set forth in the court order. It shall be the
 33 duty of the court to provide affidavits for the purpose of requesting a deferral of or
 34 excusal from jury service pursuant to this subsection."

35 **SECTION 3.**

36 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 15-12-3, relating to term of service
 37 on jury, as follows:

38 "15-12-3.

39 No person shall be compellable to serve on the ~~grand~~ or trial or grand jury of the superior
 40 court or on any jury in other courts for more than four weeks in any year. No person shall
 41 be allowed to serve on the trial jury of the superior court or on any jury in other courts for
 42 more than four weeks in any one year unless he or she is actually engaged in the trial of a
 43 case when the four weeks expire, in which case he or she shall be discharged as soon as the
 44 case is decided."

45 **SECTION 4.**

46 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (a) of Code Section 15-12-4, relating
 47 to eligibility of person to serve as a juror, as follows:

48 "(a) Any person who has served as a trial or grand juror at any session of the superior or
 49 state courts shall be ineligible for duty as a juror at the next succeeding term of the court
 50 in which such person has previously served but shall be eligible to serve at the next
 51 succeeding term of court for a different level of court."

52 **SECTION 5.**

53 Said chapter is further amended by revising paragraph (2) of subsection (a) of Code Section
 54 15-12-7, relating to compensation of court bailiffs and expense allowance for jurors, as
 55 follows:

56 "(2) An expense allowance for trial or grand jurors in the superior courts of such counties
 57 for the next succeeding year not to be less than \$5.00 nor to exceed \$50.00 per diem. The
 58 same expense allowance shall be allowed to jurors of the several state courts and special

59 courts as is allowed jurors in the superior court of the county in which the state or special
60 court is located; and"

61 **SECTION 6.**

62 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 15-12-10, relating to juror's failure
63 to appear or unauthorized absence and contempt, as follows:

64 "15-12-10.

65 If any person is duly summoned to appear as a trial or grand juror at court and neglects or
66 refuses to appear, or if any juror absents himself or herself without leave of the court, ~~said~~
67 such neglect, refusal, or absence may, after notice and hearing, be punished as contempt
68 of court."

69 **SECTION 7.**

70 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (b) of Code Section 15-12-11, relating
71 to appointment of jury clerk and other personnel, juror questionnaires, and construction with
72 other laws, as follows:

73 "(b) Prospective trial and grand jurors in all counties may be required to answer written
74 questionnaires, as may be determined and submitted by the judges of such counties,
75 concerning their qualifications as jurors. In propounding the court's questions, the court
76 may consider the suggestions of counsel. In the court's questionnaire and during voir dire
77 examination, judges should ensure that the privacy of prospective jurors is reasonably
78 protected and that the questioning by counsel is consistent with the purpose of the voir dire
79 process."

80 **SECTION 8.**

81 Said chapter is further amended by revising paragraph (2) of subsection (b) of Code Section
82 15-12-23, relating to clerk of board of jury commissioners, jury clerk, juror questionnaires,
83 and construction with other laws, as follows:

84 "(2) All prospective trial or grand jurors in such counties shall be required to answer
85 questionnaires as may be determined and submitted by said chief judge of such counties
86 concerning their qualifications as jurors."

87 **SECTION 9.**

88 Said chapter is further amended by revising subsection (a) of Code Section 15-12-40.1,
89 relating to state-wide master jury list, driver's license information, list of registered voters,
90 and random list of persons to comprise venire, as follows:

91 ~~"(a) After Beginning on and after~~ July 1, 2011, the council shall compile a state-wide
 92 master jury list. The council shall facilitate updating of all information relative to trial and
 93 grand jurors on the state-wide master jury list and county master jury lists."

94 **SECTION 10.**

95 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 15-12-46, relating to adjournment
 96 of term pending choosing of jurors, as follows:

97 "15-12-46.

98 If juries have not been chosen for any regular term of the superior court and there is not
 99 sufficient time for choosing and summoning prospective trial and grand jurors to serve at
 100 the regular term, the judge of the superior court for the county in which the failure has
 101 occurred, by order passed at chambers, may adjourn the court to another day, may require
 102 the requisite number of prospective ~~grand and trial~~ and grand jurors to be summoned, and
 103 may enforce their attendance at the term so called."

104 **SECTION 11.**

105 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 15-12-62.1, relating to choosing
 106 grand jurors, as follows:

107 "15-12-62.1.

108 The presiding judge, after consulting the district attorney, shall direct ~~On and after July 1,~~
 109 ~~2012,~~ the clerk ~~shall to~~ choose a sufficient number of persons to serve as grand jurors from
 110 the county master jury list in the same manner as trial jurors are chosen. The clerk, not less
 111 than 20 days before the commencement of each term of court at which a regular grand jury
 112 is impaneled, shall issue summonses by mail to the persons chosen for grand jury service.
 113 ~~The clerk shall choose grand jurors in the manner specified by and in accordance with the~~
 114 ~~rules adopted by the Supreme Court."~~

115 **SECTION 12.**

116 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 15-12-63, relating to choosing
 117 separate grand juries for each week, as follows:

118 "15-12-63.

119 In any term of court when the public interest requires it, the court, on application of the
 120 district attorney, may empanel one or more concurrent grand juries. ~~When the superior~~
 121 ~~court is held for longer than one week, the presiding judge may direct the clerk to choose~~
 122 ~~separate grand juries for each week."~~

123 **SECTION 13.**

124 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 15-12-66, which is designated as
 125 reserved, as follows:

126 "15-12-66.

127 (a) Prior to empaneling, swearing, and charging the grand jury, the presiding judge and the
 128 district attorney may examine prospective grand jurors as to their qualifications to serve
 129 as provided in Code Sections 15-12-4 and 15-12-60. Such examination shall be conducted
 130 after the administration of the preliminary oath set forth in subsection (b) of this Code
 131 section. Any prospective grand juror who is not qualified to serve shall be excused by the
 132 presiding judge.

133 (b) Prior to examination, the presiding judge, the district attorney, or the clerk shall
 134 administer the following oath or affirmation to prospective grand jurors:

135 'You shall give true answers to all questions as may be asked by the court or the district
 136 attorney concerning your qualifications to serve as a grand juror.' ~~Reserved."~~

137 **SECTION 14.**

138 Said chapter is further amended by revising Code Section 15-12-66.1, relating to insufficient
 139 number of persons to complete panel of grand jurors, as follows:

140 "15-12-66.1.

141 ~~When~~ On and after July 1, 2012, when from challenge or from any other cause there are
 142 not a sufficient number of persons in attendance to complete the ~~panel~~ empaneling of grand
 143 jurors, the presiding judge shall order the clerk shall to choose at random from the names
 144 of persons summoned as trial jurors a sufficient number of prospective trial grand jurors
 145 from the county master jury list and summon the jurors so chosen necessary to complete
 146 the grand jury. Nothing in this Code section shall be construed as barring the court from
 147 taking any action against a person who has been summoned to appear as a juror as provided
 148 in Code Section 15-12-10."

149 **SECTION 15.**

150 This Act shall become effective upon its approval by the Governor or upon its becoming law
 151 without such approval.

152 **SECTION 16.**

153 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.