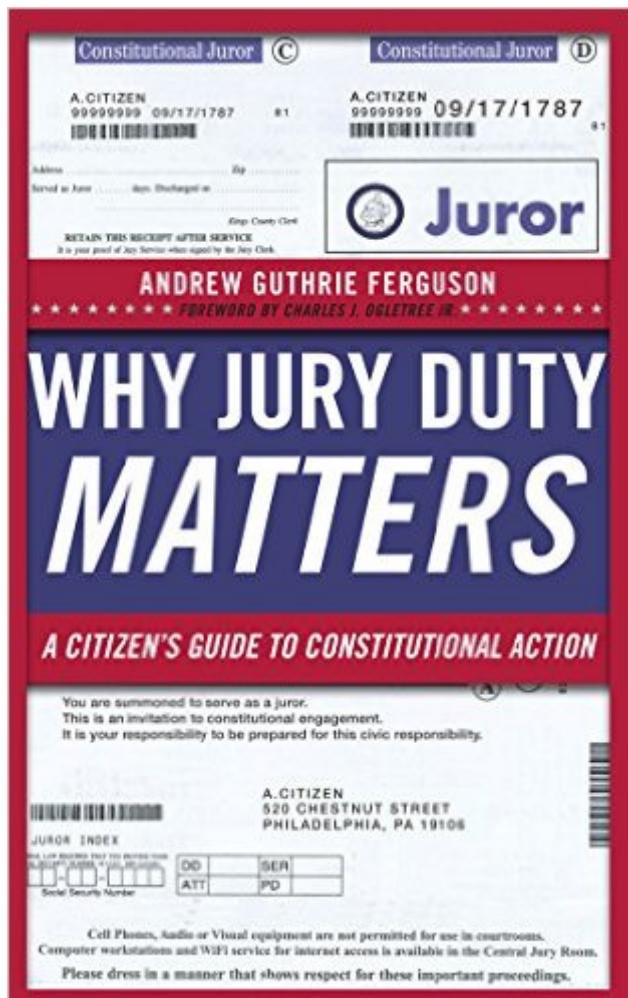


The book was found

Why Jury Duty Matters: A Citizen's Guide To Constitutional Action



Synopsis

It's easy to forget how important the jury really is to America. The right to be a juror is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed to all eligible citizens. The right to trial by jury helped spark the American Revolution, was quickly adopted at the Constitutional Convention, and is the only right that appears in both the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. But for most of us, a jury summons is an unwelcome inconvenience. Who has time for jury duty? We have things to do. In *Why Jury Duty Matters*, Andrew Guthrie Ferguson reminds us that whether we like it or not, we are all constitutional actors. Jury duty provides an opportunity to reflect on that constitutional responsibility. Combining American history, constitutional law, and personal experience, the book engages citizens in the deeper meaning of jury service. Interweaving constitutional principles into the actual jury experience, this book is a handbook for those Americans who want to enrich the jury experience. It seeks to reconnect ordinary citizens to the constitutional character of a nation by focusing on the important, and largely ignored, democratic lessons of the jury. Jury duty is a shared American tradition. It connects people across class and race, creates habits of focus and purpose, and teaches values of participation, equality, and deliberation. We know that juries are important for courts, but we don't know that jury service is important for democracy. This book inspires us to re-examine the jury experience and act on the constitutional principles that guide our country before, during, and after jury service.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

There's plenty to like about this book, but it tends to read at times like a publication of the League

of Women's Voters. Uncritical praise of the Constitution makes a fetish of a document that demands critical appraisal, and not unflinching adoration. Illustrative of the book's weakness is the following: "The genius of our jury system was to set up a mechanism so that both sides believe that they have a fair shot at winning the case. They show up because they have faith that the system will be fair." Really? Most criminal defense lawyers know a darker truth: Trials often take place because there is no hope of a just outcome -- the plea offer is too high, the charges lodged are disproportionate to the conduct alleged. Often folks go to trial not in the hope that they will get a fair trial, but in the desperate illusion that a miracle may rescue them from the inevitable. The author knows this. He was a public defender in the District of Columbia. So why is he writing with such dewy-eyed naivete? He's left the practice of law to become a law professor, teaching now at the David A. Clarke School of Law in the District of Columbia. This book won't get him tenure in a law school, but, frankly, it could get him appointed a judgeship. As I read, I could see him sitting on a bench, clad in his black robe, and telling jurors just how lucky they were to serve. The work has the sensibility of civics textbook. Perhaps there is nothing wrong with this. But I would have liked to see more on jury nullification, on the truly radical potential that jurors have to find facts and challenge misapplications of the law. Instead, the work read like an apologia for the middle of the road. The best thing about the book is the lavish footnotes.

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