

Pre-Voir Dire Instruction

I welcome you to the United States District Court for the District of Utah.

Every defendant enjoys a fundamental constitutional right to a speedy trial. As the Judge, it is my duty to ensure that the Defendant is tried as soon as practicable. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has already delayed the Defendant's trial in this matter while the court has been closed since March 2020. By setting the trial now, I attempted to balance both the public health and safety with the Defendant's right to a speedy trial. The Defendant did not choose this trial date, I did. If you have any concern about being called for jury service during this COVID-19 pandemic, that concern should be directed at me, and not at the Defendant or the Prosecution.

We have studied long and hard to have a safe trial. We have relief on scientific guidance from national and local public health sources and authorities. As part of the effort to protect your health and safety, and that of the parties and court staff, everyone will be required:

- to observe physical distancing of six feet;
- to wear a mask that covers mouth and nose; and
- to use hand sanitizer regularly.

We have imposed courthouse entry requirements, increased sanitation, increased air flow and intake of outside air, installed plexiglass barriers, and made changes to courtroom protocol to reduce the risk of infection.

Please understand that all of these measures are designed to protect your health and safety and should not in any way influence your decision if you are ultimately selected to serve on the jury.

Explaining Voir Dire Questioning

A trial starts with the selection of a fair and impartial jury. You will be asked questions to discover whether you have any information concerning the case or any opinions or other attitudes that might cause you to favor or disfavor one side or the other. These questions may probe deeply into your attitudes, beliefs and experiences, but they are not intended to embarrass you. If you do not hear or understand a question, you should say so. If you do understand the question, you should answer it freely.

Jurors in Courtroom v. Other Areas

Let me take a moment and explain to you the process we will be following. There are 13 jurors here in this courtroom. In two hours, another 13 jurors will be seated here. Today, we will meet with four groups just like yours. You will be excused in about two hours. Out of all those who come in today, 13 will be called back for the start of trial tomorrow morning.

When You Speak

As you are asked to speak, please stand and speak loudly. We are not passing a microphone for sanitation reasons.

Voir Dire Instructions Prior to Breaks

Ladies and gentlemen, we are about to take a break. Starting with the juror closest to the back of the room and continuing row by row, you will follow the courtroom deputy back to your break room. Please maintain six-foot distance while on the break. During the break, if you would like to take your mask off, please find a location with at least ten feet of space between you and the next closest person. The courtroom deputy will let you know when the break has ended and it is time to return to the courtroom.