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*House of Representatives*  
**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**  
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**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** All House Members

**From:** Representative C. Allan Egolf 

**Date:** May 5, 2003

**Re: Cosponsor Memo - Jury Service Act: An Act to Make Jury Service More Appealing and Rewarding to Citizens**

The right to a jury trial is perhaps the most unique characteristic of the American justice system. Jury service is considered an important obligation of good citizenship. However, many people fail to appear for jury duty when summoned, or strive to get out of their duty once they enter the courthouse. Part of the problem is not due to a lack of civic responsibility, but rather discouragement because of the hardships imposed by long waits, length of time to serve, and inflexibility as to dates of service. Moreover, exemptions based on occupation give some members of society an automatic excuse from serving. Loosely defined hardship exemptions provide many others with a means of avoiding their duty. This avoidance of duty jeopardizes the rights of litigants, and in more than one case, delayed a murder trial. (Last year a Louisiana court was forced to postpone a second-degree murder trial because only 41 of 150 people summoned for duty showed up. A Texas murder trial was delayed when 23 jurors did not appear and 8 were excused out of 123 summoned.)

The Jury Service Act addresses and breaks down the barriers that currently make many juries unrepresentative of the communities, which they serve. Jurors will benefit from the flexibility of an easy method to postpone and reschedule service, and from the adoption of a one-day/ one-trial system that would reduce the frustrating time spent in a courthouse waiting room. It also will eliminate loopholes, repeal automatic exemptions, limit excuses and increase penalties for no-shows.

Through these reforms, all citizens, regardless of income or occupation, will be expected and able to serve on a jury, and they will be welcomed by a more friendly jury system.

I would appreciate your support by co-sponsoring this legislation. Please contact Teri Root at 783-1593 or by email [troot@pahousegop.com](mailto:troot@pahousegop.com).