CASES, CONTEXT & CONSEQUENCES™

The Year In Justice 2027

Legal Explainer

Complimentary companion to the 2027 Justice Calendar

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A date on the calendar can tell you when a case was decided or a law was enacted. This guide explains what changed and how it affects who serves on a jury, how a trial is conducted, and what jurors must decide.

Find your month below, then select the citation under any entry to read the opinion, law, or historical record. The calendar runs from January 2027 through March 2028. The label “calendar entry” identifies the calendar date for a statutory spotlight or recurring event.

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For public legal education. Consult the court’s instructions and the law of the applicable jurisdiction for a specific case.

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January and February

Jury pools and federal jury service

JANUARY 2027

Duren v. Missouri

Jan. 9, 1979

Missouri let women opt out of jury service on request. The Court set out a three-part test for a preliminary fair-cross-section claim: a distinctive group, unfair underrepresentation in jury pools, and systematic exclusion in the selection process. The test examines how the pool is assembled. **439 U.S. 357**

Hurst v. Florida

Jan. 12, 2016

Florida's former capital sentencing procedure let the judge make the factual findings required to authorize a death sentence. The Sixth Amendment requires a jury to find the facts necessary to make a defendant eligible for death. The ruling addresses eligibility findings under the former scheme. **577 U.S. 92**

Taylor v. Louisiana

Jan. 21, 1975

Louisiana generally summoned women only if they volunteered. The Court held that drawing prospective jurors from a fair cross section of the community is essential to the Sixth Amendment jury right. A male defendant could challenge the system. The rule applies to the pool. The seated jury's composition may vary. **419 U.S. 522**

Holland v. Illinois

Jan. 22, 1990

The Court held that the Sixth Amendment fair-cross-section requirement does not extend to the final jury selected through peremptory strikes. Equal protection supplies a separate rule against discriminatory strikes. Read this case alongside Batson and Powers in April. **493 U.S. 474**

FEBRUARY 2027

Feb. 1 calendar entry

Employment protection for federal jurors

An employer may not fire, threaten to fire, intimidate, or coerce a permanent employee because of federal jury service or scheduled attendance. A court may order relief such as reinstatement and lost wages or benefits. Pay for time spent serving is a separate question. **28 U.S.C. § 1875**

Feb. 3, 1870

Fifteenth Amendment ratified

The amendment bars the United States and the states from denying or abridging a citizen's voting rights because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. It gave Black men constitutional protection against race-based voting exclusion. Where jury lists draw from voter records, voting barriers can also affect who enters the jury pool.

National Archives

Feb. 12 calendar entry

Missing federal jury service

A federal district court may order someone who fails to appear as summoned to explain why. If the person fails to show good cause, the court may impose a fine of up to $1,000, up to three days in jail, community service, or a combination. A person seeking a postponement or excusal should follow the instructions on the summons.

28 U.S.C. § 1866(g)

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March

Equal access, trial rights, and proof

MARCH 2027

Civil Rights Act of 1875

Mar. 1, 1875

Congress barred exclusion of otherwise qualified citizens from federal or state juries based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The Supreme Court struck down the Act's public-accommodations provisions in the Civil Rights Cases in 1883. The jury provision had a separate legal history. See 18 U.S.C. § 243 in April. **18 Stat. 335, § 4**

Strauder v. West Virginia

Mar. 1, 1880

West Virginia limited jury service to white men. The Court held that excluding Black citizens from jury eligibility by statute denied a Black defendant equal protection. The ruling protects against racial exclusion from jury selection without requiring jurors of a particular race to sit on any individual case. **100 U.S. 303**

Coffin v. United States

Mar. 4, 1895

The Court recognized the presumption of innocence as fundamental and held that the federal trial court erred when it refused a requested instruction on that presumption. The prosecution bears the burden of proving guilt. **156 U.S. 432**

Peña-Rodriguez v. Colorado

Mar. 6, 2017

Courts generally restrict inquiry into jury deliberations after a verdict. The Sixth Amendment requires a narrow exception when a juror makes a clear statement indicating that racial stereotypes or animus were a significant motivating factor in a vote to convict. The exception allows judicial review of the claim. **580 U.S. 206**

Gideon v. Wainwright

Mar. 18, 1963

The Court held that states must provide counsel to indigent defendants charged with felonies. Counsel can challenge evidence, question witnesses, and protect the accused's rights during jury selection. **372 U.S. 335**

Ballew v. Georgia

Mar. 21, 1978

The Court held that a five-person jury was constitutionally too small for a state criminal trial where the jury right applied. Read it with Williams in June, which upheld a six-person jury. **435 U.S. 223**

Victor v. Nebraska

Mar. 22, 1994

The Constitution requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt, and courts can explain that standard in different words. Reviewing each instruction as a whole, the Court asked whether there was a reasonable likelihood that jurors understood it to permit conviction on a lower standard. **511 U.S. 1**

Jury Selection and Service Act

Mar. 27, 1968

The Act established a framework for random selection of federal grand and trial juries from a fair cross section of the community. Federal district courts administer written selection plans. The Act protects access to service and bars exclusion on specified grounds. **Pub. L. 90-274, 82 Stat. 53**

In re Winship

Mar. 31, 1970

Due process requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt of every fact necessary to establish the charged offense. The Court applied that standard in juvenile delinquency adjudications based on conduct that would be criminal if committed by an adult. Winship addressed the burden of proof in juvenile court. **397 U.S. 358**

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April

Jury selection and verdicts

APRIL 2027

Norris v. Alabama

Apr. 1, 1935

In a Scottsboro case, the Court found systematic exclusion of qualified Black citizens from jury service despite facially neutral rules. Longstanding absence from jury rolls and evidence of qualified residents helped establish the violation. Courts can examine how officials apply selection rules in practice. **294 U.S. 587**

Powers v. Ohio

Apr. 1, 1991

A criminal defendant may challenge a prosecutor's race-based peremptory exclusion of prospective jurors even when the defendant and excluded jurors are of different races. The decision recognizes the excluded juror's equal protection interest as well as the harm discriminatory strikes cause the proceedings. **499 U.S. 400**

Race-based exclusion from jury service

Apr. 4 calendar entry

This federal criminal provision applies to officials or others charged with selecting or summoning jurors for state or federal courts. It penalizes excluding or failing to summon an otherwise qualified citizen because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The statutory maximum fine is $5,000. **18 U.S.C. § 243**

J.E.B. v. Alabama ex rel. T.B.

Apr. 19, 1994

In a state paternity and child-support case, the Court held that equal protection prohibits peremptory strikes based on sex. Lawyers may examine an individual's ability to be impartial. A sex-based assumption about how the person will decide the case cannot justify a strike. **511 U.S. 127**

Ramos v. Louisiana

Apr. 20, 2020

The Sixth Amendment requires a unanimous jury verdict to convict of a serious offense in state as well as federal court. The Court rejected Louisiana's use of a 10–2 guilty verdict. A divided vote for guilt cannot support a conviction in those cases. **590 U.S. 83**

Griffin v. California

Apr. 28, 1965

The Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination bars the prosecution from asking jurors to infer guilt because a defendant chose not to testify. It also bars the court from instructing jurors that they may draw that inference. The prosecution retains the burden of proving guilt. **380 U.S. 609**

Batson v. Kentucky

Apr. 30, 1986

A prosecutor may not use a peremptory strike to exclude a prospective juror because of race. When circumstances support an inference of discrimination, the prosecutor must give a race-neutral reason, and the court then decides whether purposeful discrimination occurred. Flowers shows why a court must evaluate the explanation in context. **476 U.S. 79**

Two points where exclusion can occur

Norris looks at how qualified citizens were kept off jury rolls. Batson looks at how a lawyer used a strike during jury selection for a particular trial. The stage of selection determines what evidence a court needs to examine.

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May

The right to a fair trial

MAY 2027

Law Day

May 1 annual observance

Congress designated May 1 as Law Day, U.S.A., an observance of the role of law in American civic life. Jury service gives eligible members of the public a direct role in the administration of justice. **36 U.S.C. § 113**

Hernandez v. Texas

May 3, 1954

The Court held that equal protection in jury selection extends to people of Mexican descent. Evidence that qualified members of the community had been excluded over many years supported the claim. Constitutional protection reaches groups subjected to discrimination beyond the racial categories Texas urged the Court to recognize. **347 U.S. 475**

Duncan v. Louisiana

May 20, 1968

The Court held that the Fourteenth Amendment makes the Sixth Amendment criminal jury-trial right applicable to the states in serious cases. Duncan faced up to two years in prison. Petty offenses can fall outside the constitutional jury-trial guarantee. **391 U.S. 145**

Taylor v. Kentucky

May 30, 1978

The trial judge refused a requested presumption-of-innocence instruction. Considering the instructions, arguments, and circumstances together, the Court held that the omission denied this defendant a fair trial. The decision illustrates how an instruction helps jurors assess the evidence without giving weight to the accusation itself. **436 U.S. 478**

Three questions to keep separate

Duncan asks when the accused has a constitutional right to a jury trial. Hernandez asks who had a fair chance to be considered for the jury. Taylor v. Kentucky asks whether the instructions and circumstances protected the presumption of innocence in the trial itself.

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June

Jury impartiality and independence

JUNE 2027

Edmonson v. Leesville Concrete Co.

Jun. 3, 1991

The Court held that private parties in civil trials may not use race-based peremptory strikes. Exercising a strike relies on the authority of the court. A civil litigant can object on behalf of prospective jurors excluded because of race. **500 U.S. 614**

Irvin v. Dowd

Jun. 5, 1961

Pervasive hostile publicity and evidence of fixed opinions among jurors made the trial constitutionally unfair. Jurors can have heard about a case if they can set aside what they learned and decide on the evidence presented in court. **366 U.S. 717**

Sheppard v. Maxwell

Jun. 6, 1966

Intense publicity and disruption in and around the courtroom compromised the defendant's right to a fair trial. The Court emphasized the trial judge's responsibility to manage the proceedings and protect jurors from prejudicial outside influence. **384 U.S. 333**

Magna Carta

Jun. 15, 1215

The charter limited certain actions by the English Crown against free people by requiring lawful judgment of their peers or the law of the land. Its language is an important historical antecedent to legal protections against arbitrary power. Modern American jury rights have their own constitutional sources. **1215 charter, clause 39**

Georgia v. McCollum

Jun. 18, 1992

The Court held that criminal defense lawyers also may not use peremptory strikes to exclude prospective jurors because of race. The prosecution may challenge those strikes on behalf of excluded jurors. This decision appears alongside the January cases in the calendar material. **505 U.S. 42**

Flowers v. Mississippi

Jun. 21, 2019

The Court held that a prosecutor's strike of a Black prospective juror violated Batson. It considered the history of strikes across repeated trials, disparate questioning, and how the prosecutor treated comparable jurors. An explanation for a strike must be assessed against the full record. **588 U.S. 284**

Williams v. Florida

Jun. 22, 1970

The Court upheld a six-person jury in a state criminal trial and held that the Sixth Amendment does not fix every criminal jury at twelve. Ballew, in March, draws the constitutional line against a five-person jury when the jury right applies. **399 U.S. 78**

Skilling v. United States

Jun. 24, 2010

The Court rejected the argument that publicity surrounding Enron's collapse made the Houston trial inherently unfair. It considered the size of the community, the nature of the publicity, the time elapsed, and the trial record. The decision shows why courts evaluate specific signs of prejudice when considering a venue challenge. **561 U.S. 358**

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July and August

Jury rights and civic participation

JULY 2027

Declaration of Independence

Jul. 4, 1776

The Declaration lists deprivation of the benefits of trial by jury among the colonists' grievances against the Crown. It records why jury trial mattered to the founders. The Constitution and Bill of Rights later supplied enforceable jury guarantees. **National Archives**

Fourteenth Amendment proclaimed

Jul. 28, 1868

The National Archives dates ratification to July 9. Secretary of State William Seward formally proclaimed the amendment on July 28. Its Equal Protection Clause underlies decisions against discriminatory jury selection. Its Due Process Clause applies several federal criminal-trial guarantees to the states. **15 Stat. 708 and National Archives**

AUGUST 2027

John Peter Zenger acquitted

Aug. 4, 1735

A colonial New York jury acquitted a printer prosecuted for publishing criticism of the royal governor. The trial is remembered as an example of jury independence and a landmark in the history of press freedom. The First Amendment came decades later. **Historical Society of the New York Courts**

Voting Rights Act signed

Aug. 6, 1965

Congress enacted the law to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment. It targeted discriminatory voting practices, including literacy tests in covered jurisdictions. The connection to juries is practical. When voter records supply names for jury lists, unequal access to registration can affect who is available for service. **Pub. L. 89-110, 79 Stat. 437**

Nineteenth Amendment certified

Aug. 26, 1920

Ratified on August 18 and certified on August 26, the amendment bars denial or abridgment of voting rights on account of sex. Jury eligibility was governed by separate rules. Taylor and Duren, in January, address barriers to women's jury service that persisted decades later. **National Archives**

Voting records and the jury pool

Federal jury plans use voter registration or actual voter lists and must use another source when necessary to meet federal fair-cross-section and nondiscrimination requirements. The source list matters because it helps determine who can receive a summons. **28 U.S.C. § 1863(b)(2)**

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September

Jury independence and the federal courts

SEPTEMBER 2027

William Penn and William Mead acquitted

Sep. 5, 1670

After a London jury acquitted Penn and Mead, the court fined and jailed jurors who refused to pay. Juror Edward Bushel challenged his confinement. In Bushel's Case, the court held that jurors could not be punished for their verdict. The episode illustrates how juror independence protects deliberation from judicial coercion. **Trial account, Library of Congress**

Constitution Day

Sep. 17 annual observance

Constitution Day and Citizenship Day marks the signing of the Constitution on September 17, 1787. The original Constitution's Article III protects criminal jury trial except in impeachment cases. The Sixth Amendment later specified additional protections, including impartiality. **36 U.S.C. § 106**

Judiciary Act of 1789

Sep. 24, 1789

The first Congress organized the federal judiciary, establishing district and circuit courts and setting the Supreme Court's initial size at six. The Act also addressed jury administration in federal court. Its institutional significance is that it supplied a court system to exercise the judicial power outlined in Article III. **1 Stat. 73**

Congress proposes the Bill of Rights

Sep. 25, 1789

Congress approved twelve proposed amendments for submission to the states. Ten were ratified in 1791. The jury-related guarantees that became the Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Amendments cover different proceedings, including grand jury indictment, criminal trial, and certain civil trials. **National Archives**

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October through December

The Court and constitutional safeguards

OCTOBER 2027

Thurgood Marshall sworn in

Oct. 2, 1967

Marshall became the first Black justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Before joining the Court, he had served as U.S. Solicitor General and argued Brown v. Board of Education as an NAACP lawyer. **Federal Judicial Center**

Supreme Court term opens

Oct. 4, 2027 calendar entry

Federal law provides for a Supreme Court term beginning on the first Monday in October. In 2027 that falls on October 4. The date marks the start of the Court's annual term. **28 U.S.C. §**

NOVEMBER 2027

Powell v. Alabama

Nov. 7, 1932

In the Scottsboro prosecutions, the Court held that the defendants had been denied due process because they lacked meaningful assistance of counsel in capital cases under the circumstances presented. The ruling recognized that appointment must give counsel a real opportunity to prepare and defend. Gideon later established a broader right to appointed counsel in state felony cases. **287 U.S. 45**

DECEMBER 2027

Thirteenth Amendment ratified

Dec. 6, 1865

The amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude, with an exception for punishment for a crime after conviction. It also gave Congress enforcement authority. Read it with the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which address citizenship, equality, and race-based voting exclusion. **National Archives**

Bill of Rights ratified

Dec. 15, 1791

The Sixth Amendment guarantees a speedy and public criminal trial by an impartial jury, along with other trial rights including assistance of counsel. The Fifth Amendment addresses grand jury indictment for certain federal offenses, subject to exceptions. The Seventh Amendment preserves the jury right in certain federal civil cases. **National Archives**

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January through March 2028

Returning entries and where to find the full explanations

JANUARY 2028

Jan. 9	**Duren v. Missouri** Systematic underrepresentation in jury pools
Jan. 12	**Hurst v. Florida** Jury findings for death-penalty eligibility
Jan. 21	**Taylor v. Louisiana** Fair cross section in the prospective pool
Jan. 22	**Holland v. Illinois** Fair cross section and the final jury
Related case	**Georgia v. McCollum** Race-based defense strikes

FEBRUARY 2028

February	**Employment protection for federal jurors** Permanent employees and federal jury service
Feb. 3	**Fifteenth Amendment ratified** Constitutional protection against race-based voting exclusion
Feb. 12	**Missing federal jury service** Show-cause proceedings and possible sanctions

MARCH 2028

Mar. 1	**Strauder v. West Virginia** Racial exclusion by law from jury eligibility
Mar. 4	**Coffin v. United States** Presumption of innocence in federal court
Mar. 6	**Peña-Rodriguez v. Colorado** Review of racial bias in jury deliberations
Mar. 21	**Ballew v. Georgia** Constitutional limits on jury size
Mar. 22	**Victor v. Nebraska** How courts review reasonable-doubt instructions
Mar. 27	**Jury Selection and Service Act** How federal courts assemble jury pools
Mar. 31	**In re Winship** Reasonable doubt in juvenile delinquency adjudication

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