



November 9, 2010

Sent via US Mail

Presiding Judge Rolefson
Rene C. Davidson Courthouse
1225 Fallon Street
Oakland, CA 94612

Jury Commissioner Sweeten
Rene C. Davidson Courthouse
1225 Fallon Street
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Alameda County Jury Pools

Dear Presiding Judge Rolefson and Commissioner Sweeten,

We are writing to express our concern over the current jury summons process used by the Alameda County Superior Court and its failure to produce jury panels that accurately reflect the county's population.

The Alameda County Superior Court serves a vital and important function for our community and all of its citizens. However, a recent study finds that jury pools in Alameda County do not reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the county at large and the current jury summons process may be partially responsible. *Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Alameda County Jury Pools* examines the jury summons process used in Alameda as compared to similar counties in California. The study then uses demographic information from 11 felony trials at the Rene C. Davidson Courthouse from 2009 and 2010 to illustrate the racial and ethnic disparities in the jury pools. Finally, the study discusses potential shortcomings of the current jury summons process that may inadvertently contribute to the problem and then lists several opportunities for improvement.

As you know, the inability to draw jurors from a large pool of eligible potential jurors that reflect the county's population has serious implications for the fairness of our justice system, particularly criminal trials. Accordingly, the Superior Court has an obligation to take all necessary steps within its control to ensure that the Alameda County jury summons process is efficient while capturing as many eligible potential jurors as possible.

We direct your attention to the policy recommendations set forth on pages four and five of the study and look forward to your response. I will be in touch with your office soon to schedule a meeting to discuss this important issue in our County.

Sincerely,

Diana Tate Vermeire
Racial Justice Project Director
American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California

Signed on behalf of

*Alameda County Bar Association
Asian American Bar Association of the Greater Bay Area
Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom*

*Charles Houston Bar Association
East Bay La Raza Lawyers Association
Women Lawyers of Alameda County*