

American Bar Association chief: I'll create better jury system

By Helen Silvis

Special to Sentinel-Voice

PORTLAND, Oregon (NNPA) — The president of the American Bar Association, Robert Grey, who took office in August, said he will devote his term of office to creating a better, more representative jury system.

"We recognize that serving on a jury should be viewed as a high calling of citizenship," Grey said. "Why? Because it is one of the few ways in which every citizen can participate in government — the other most notable is voting. Jury service is one of two ways we make no distinction about race, religion or station.

"What we want to do is to make sure there are no impediments to serving. We want to look carefully at the way we develop pools of jurors, make sure those pools are updated on a regular basis and develop juries that are truly representative of our communities."

Grey launched the American Jury Initiative by creating the American Jury Project, which is working to produce a single set of modern jury standards the ABA can propose as a national model, and a blue-ribbon Commission on the American Jury that will be working on outreach to the public, the profession and the courts.

Judges, lawyers, court officials and community leaders attended a conference recently to begin an examination of juries in Multnomah County [Oregon] that will continue until May 2005.

Ransaw

(Continued from Page 16) and succeed in school. When was the last time you checked your child's homework?

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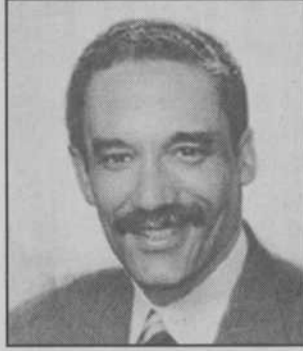
Don't be Afraid to ask

Don't be afraid to ask your job to adopt a school. Believe me, your child's school can use extra pens, pencils, and paper.

It's more than a Black and White issue. I've seen many White teachers pick up and hold little Black kids when they need a pat on the back or a hug for support. It's not just simply a matter of busing kids from one neighborhood school to another. Little Black children do not want to be bused all the way across town anymore than little White

"We recognize that serving on a jury should be viewed as a high calling of citizenship."

— Robert Grey, President of American Bar Association



Grey addressed the meeting as did Chief Justice Wallace P. Carson Jr., who heads the Oregon Supreme Court. Topics under discussion include: juror pay, diversity in the jury pool, juror privacy and clear jury instructions.

"We want to see if there are ways we can improve citizen participation," said Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Dale Koch, "and we want to improve the experience citizens have when they serve on a jury. I think this may turn out to be the first of many similar events around the country." Koch spearheading the effort along with Judge Ellen Rosenblum, a former prosecutor, who served as secretary of the American Bar Association in 2003.

Between 100 and 150 people each day attend the Multnomah County jury pool at the courthouse.

Potential jurors wait in a large jury room to be called for service. In some parts of the nation, jurors are required to attend for a month, but in Multnomah County jurors are called for just one day.

If they are not called to serve on a trial they are dis-

missed.

If called to serve on a trial, jurors may deal with anything

from a misdemeanor to aggravated murder or a case of professional negligence where somebody has died. The majority of cases last one or two days, but cases can stretch to as long as two months.

Jurors are paid \$10 a day for the first two days and \$25 a day for every subsequent day. In 2001, the Legislature raised the compensation from \$25 to \$50, but during last year's budget crisis that increase was repealed.

"Talking to the jurors we find that many of them can't sit on a case that lasts a month, for family and other reasons," Koch said. "So if we know we have a long murder case or a long civil case, we actually bring in a larger number of people."

"About 30 percent of people in Multnomah County just don't respond to the summons at all," he added. "But that is low compared to the national figure. It's a national problem"

Multnomah County already has made changes to the jury system in an effort to help more people participate, and to improve the experience for jurors. One change was to reduce the time of service to one day. Another was to introduce written instructions for jurors.

State Sen. Kate Brown, D-Portland, said she served on a jury in 2001. Brown spoke alongside Grey Tuesday at a meeting of the Cam-

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children. Besides, what city do you know that buses kids to schools in the suburbs? It's more than a Clark County School District issue. The state gaming industry does not want your child to go to college. The state economy is based on surplus service industry workers. How can you get students to enroll in Nevada colleges when you can park cars straight out of high school and make thirty-five thousand dollars a year? The education system all across America is based on property value, not just racism. It's a matter of class, not culture. But don't believe just me. Drive around the different neighborhoods in the city and see for yourself. I'm sure you'll find the real 'state of American education.

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