

# The Daily Utah CHRONICLE

## Welfare recipients can help society by serving jury duty

By: Courtney Tanner – March 5, 2013

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The two most formidable swear words in America are “jury duty.”

A citizen’s obligation to serve as a juror entails long hours and little pay (less than minimum wage – which is definitely something to curse about). It also requires working-class citizens to leave their jobs with no mandatory compensation from employers.

However, there’s a simple solution – rather than taking working-class employees out of their jobs to serve as jurors, the state and federal governments should enlist current recipients of unemployment and welfare benefits to serve instead.

If American citizens on unemployment and welfare serve on jury duty, there would be remarkable benefits for the United States.

By requiring mandatory jury duty, unemployment and welfare would no longer be derided as “free giveaways.” Those dependent on federal benefits would work for what they receive in perhaps one of the highest-calling jobs of citizenship.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 7.9 percent of Americans are currently unemployed, and more than 4 million people (4.1 percent of the U.S. population) are living on welfare, according to the CATO Institute.

If these citizens worked to earn unemployment and welfare dividends by serving on juries, perhaps later they would become more accustomed to working for their earnings. There wouldn’t be any more handouts, per se, but a simple way to repay the government for their services.

Former President Ronald Reagan once said, “we should measure welfare’s success by how many people leave welfare, not by how many are added.” Jury duty could encourage such a movement.

Welfare and unemployment are programs designed to get people working again. However, this hasn’t been the case in recent years. Both programs have become a dependency for many Americans. By making jury duty a requirement for any governmental monetary supplements, more citizens might be inclined to get a job. Let’s face it – no one likes jury duty.

Those who already have a job need to be exempt from serving, as they are already fulfilling a citizen's duty in society — earning a living.

Lastly, having those on welfare and unemployment pay their dues through jury duty would save a little money.

Everything in life isn't about pinching pennies, but pinching pennies certainly doesn't do any harm. The federal government spends \$1.03 trillion a year on the 83 welfare programs in the United States. By reducing the number of those dependent on welfare and unemployment, the extra money could fund other programs to finance the national debt.

Additionally, federal jurors are paid \$40 per day to serve on jury duty. This money would no longer be required to pay a juror, as jurors would essentially be paid through their welfare or unemployment benefits.

**Making jury duty a requirement for those receiving government benefits is not punishment. Rather, it is a way to make the systems of welfare and unemployment more beneficial to every American. Welfare could become more rehabilitating in this way.**

Jury duty is a swear word that could be transformed into a blessing.