

The Role of the Jury in the American Legal System: A Comprehensive Overview



The Jury in America: Triumph and Decline (American Political Thought) by Nicholas Humphrey

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The jury system is a cornerstone of the American legal system, playing a vital role in ensuring justice and protecting the rights of citizens. This article provides a comprehensive overview of the jury system in America, including its history, structure, and functions.

History of the Jury System

The jury system has its roots in ancient Greece and Rome, where citizens played a role in the administration of justice. The modern jury system was developed in England during the 12th century, and it was brought to America by English settlers in the 17th century.

The jury system has undergone several changes over the years. In the early days, juries were composed of men who owned property. However, in the 19th century, the right to serve on a jury was extended to women and non-property owners. In the 20th century, the Supreme Court ruled that juries must be representative of the community, which means that they must include people of different races, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Structure of the Jury System

The jury system is used in both civil and criminal cases. In civil cases, the jury decides whether the defendant is liable for damages. In criminal cases, the jury decides whether the defendant is guilty of the crime charged.

Juries are typically composed of 12 people, although some jurisdictions use juries of 6 or 8 people. The jurors are selected from a pool of eligible citizens. The selection process is designed to ensure that the jury is impartial and representative of the community.

Once the jury is selected, the trial begins. The jury hears the evidence and arguments presented by both sides. After the trial, the jury deliberates and reaches a verdict. The verdict must be unanimous in criminal cases, but it can be non-unanimous in civil cases.

Functions of the Jury

The jury has several important functions in the American legal system. First, the jury decides the facts of the case. The jury listens to the evidence and makes a determination about what happened.

Second, the jury applies the law to the facts of the case. The jury is instructed on the law by the judge, and it must apply the law to the facts in order to reach a verdict.

Third, the jury makes a decision about the guilt or innocence of the defendant. In criminal cases, the jury decides whether the defendant is guilty beyond a reasonable doubt. In civil cases, the jury decides whether the defendant is liable for damages.

Importance of the Jury System

The jury system is an important part of the American legal system. It provides citizens with a voice in the administration of justice. The jury system also helps to ensure that the government does not become too powerful.

The jury system is not without its critics. Some people argue that juries are not always representative of the community. Others argue that juries are too emotional and that they are not capable of making impartial decisions.

However, the jury system remains an important part of the American legal system. It is a system that is based on the principle that ordinary citizens are capable of making fair and impartial decisions.

The jury system is a cornerstone of the American legal system. It is a system that has been in place for centuries, and it has played a vital role in ensuring justice and protecting the rights of citizens. The jury system is not without its critics, but it remains an important part of the American legal system.



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