



Judicial Council of California

520 Capitol Mall, Suite 600 · Sacramento, California 95814-4717

Telephone 916-323-3121 · Fax 916-323-4347

PATRICIA GUERRERO
Chief Justice of California
Chair of the Judicial Council

MICHELLE CURRAN
Administrative Director

July 2, 2025

Hon. Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, California 95814

Subject: Assembly Bill 223 [Pacheco], as introduced – Request for Signature

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Judicial Council respectfully requests your signature on Assembly Bill 223 (Pacheco), a Judicial Council sponsored bill which makes plain language revisions to the oaths that jurors must agree to prior to voir dire and after being selected. This proposal is comprised of technical amendments, and otherwise leaves the substance of the oaths intact.

Under existing law, jurors generally must take an oath at two different stages of a trial. The first oath they must take occurs prior to jury selection, in which they agree to accurately and truthfully answer all questions concerning their qualifications and competency to serve as a trial juror. The second oath occurs right after jury selection is over; jurors must acknowledge that they will consider the case before them, and reach a verdict based only on the evidence and the court's instructions.

Code of Civil Procedure section 232 sets forth the express text of the oaths that must be read to jurors. The statutory language uses words and phrases that may be outdated or unfamiliar for those serving on a jury. For example, the juror selection oath requires jurors to acknowledge that they will truthfully answer all questions “propounded” to them concerning their qualifications and competency. The other oath requires jurors to agree that they will “well and truly try the cause now pending before this court, and a true verdict render” according to the evidence and court instructions. Such language can serve as a barrier that limits a juror’s ability to understand the oaths and the duties that they are agreeing to carry out.

Hon. Gavin Newsom

July 2, 2025

Page 2

AB 223 makes narrowly tailored plain language revisions to the oaths so that jurors can better understand them. Using plain language when interacting with juries has been a longstanding goal for the Judicial Council. Both a Blue Ribbon Commission on Jury System Improvement from 1996, and a Task Force on Jury System Improvement from 2004, suggested that plain language instructions be given to jurors. While the suggestion to use plain language was adopted in the context of jury instructions, the statute governing juror oaths has remained untouched since 1989. This bill continues the task of using plain language in the jury context, so that jurors can more readily fulfill their roles in the justice system.

For these reasons, the Judicial Council is proud to sponsor AB 223 and respectfully requests your signature.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mureed Rasool at 916-323-3121.

Sincerely,



Cory T. Jasperson
Director
Governmental Affairs

CJ/MR/jh

cc: Hon. Blanca Pacheco, Member of the Assembly, 64th District
Jith Meganathan, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of the Governor
Michelle Curran, Administrative Director, Judicial Council of California



Judicial Council of California

520 Capitol Mall, Suite 600 · Sacramento, California 95814-4717

Telephone 916-323-3121 · Fax 916-323-4347

PATRICIA GUERRERO
Chief Justice of California
Chair of the Judicial Council

MICHELLE CURRAN
Administrative Director

June 16, 2025

Hon. Jesse Arreguín
Chair, Senate Public Safety Committee
1020 N Street, Room 545
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Assembly Bill 223 (Pacheco), as introduced—Sponsor
Hearing: Senate Public Safety Committee—June 24, 2025

Dear Senator Arreguín:

The Judicial Council is pleased to sponsor Assembly Bill 223 (Pacheco) which makes plain language revisions to the juror and prospective juror oaths obtained from the jury panel prior to the examination of prospective trial jurors assigned for voir dire and after the completion of selection of trial jurors. This proposal is comprised of technical amendments, and otherwise leaves the substance of the oaths intact.

Under existing law, jurors generally must take an oath at two different stages of a trial. The first oath they must take occurs prior to jury selection, in which they agree to accurately and truthfully answer all questions concerning their qualifications and competency to serve as a trial juror. The second oath occurs right after jury selection is over; jurors must acknowledge that they will consider the case before them, and reach a verdict based only on the evidence and the court's instructions.

Code of Civil Procedure section 232 sets forth the express text of the oaths that must be read to jurors. The statutory language uses words and phrases that may be outdated or unfamiliar for those serving on a jury. For example, the juror selection oath requires jurors to acknowledge that they will truthfully answer all questions “propounded” to them concerning their qualifications and competency. The other oath requires jurors to agree that they will “well and truly try the cause now pending before this court, and a true verdict render” according to the evidence and court

Hon. Jesse Arreguín

June 16, 2025

Page 2

instructions. Such language can serve as a barrier that limits a juror's ability to understand the oaths and the duties that they are agreeing to carry out.

AB 223 makes narrowly tailored plain language revisions to the oaths so that jurors can better understand them. Using plain language when interacting with juries has been a longstanding goal for the Judicial Council. Both a Blue Ribbon Commission on Jury System Improvement from 1996, and a Task Force on Jury System Improvement from 2004, suggested that plain language instructions be given to jurors. While the suggestion to use plain language was adopted in the context of jury instructions, the statute governing juror oaths has remained untouched since 1989. This bill continues the task of using plain language in the jury context, so that jurors can more readily fulfill their roles in the justice system.

For these reasons, the Judicial Council is pleased to sponsor AB 223.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mureed Rasool at 916-323-3121.

Sincerely,



Cory T. Jasperson
Director
Governmental Affairs

CTJ/MR/lmm

cc: Members, Senate Public Safety Committee
Hon. Blanca Pacheco, Member of the Assembly, 64th District
Ms. Cheryl Anderson, Counsel, Senate Public Safety Committee
Mr. Eric Csizmar, Policy Consultant, Senate Republican Caucus
Mr. Jith Meganathan, Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of the Governor
Ms. Michelle Curran, Administrative Director, Judicial Council of California



Judicial Council of California

520 Capitol Mall, Suite 600 · Sacramento, California 95814-4717

Telephone 916-323-3121 · Fax 916-323-4347

PATRICIA GUERRERO
Chief Justice of California
Chair of the Judicial Council

MICHELLE CURRAN
Administrative Director

June 10, 2025

Hon. Thomas J. Umberg
Chair, Senate Judiciary Committee
1021 O Street, Room 3240
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Assembly Bill 223 (Pacheco), as introduced—Sponsor
Hearing: Senate Judiciary Committee—June 17, 2025

Dear Senator Umberg:

The Judicial Council is pleased to sponsor Assembly Bill 223 (Pacheco) which makes plain language revisions to the juror and prospective juror oaths obtained from the jury panel prior to the examination of prospective trial jurors assigned for voir dire and after the completion of selection of trial jurors. This proposal is comprised of technical amendments, and otherwise leaves the substance of the oaths intact.

Under existing law, jurors generally must take an oath at two different stages of a trial. The first oath they must take occurs prior to jury selection, in which they agree to accurately and truthfully answer all questions concerning their qualifications and competency to serve as a trial juror. The second oath occurs right after jury selection is over; jurors must acknowledge that they will consider the case before them, and reach a verdict based only on the evidence and the court's instructions.

Code of Civil Procedure section 232 sets forth the express text of the oaths that must be read to jurors. The statutory language uses words and phrases that may be outdated or unfamiliar for those serving on a jury. For example, the juror selection oath requires jurors to acknowledge that they will truthfully answer all questions “propounded” to them concerning their qualifications and competency. The other oath requires jurors to agree that they will “well and truly try the cause now pending before this court, and a true verdict render” according to the evidence and court

Hon. Thomas J. Umberg

June 10, 2025

Page 2

instructions. Such language can serve as a barrier that limits a juror's ability to understand the oaths and the duties that they are agreeing to carry out.

AB 223 makes narrowly tailored plain language revisions to the oaths so that jurors can better understand them. Using plain language when interacting with juries has been a longstanding goal for the Judicial Council. Both a Blue Ribbon Commission on Jury System Improvement from 1996, and a Task Force on Jury System Improvement from 2004, suggested that plain language instructions be given to jurors. While the suggestion to use plain language was adopted in the context of jury instructions, the statute governing juror oaths has remained untouched since 1989. This bill continues the task of using plain language in the jury context, so that jurors can more readily fulfill their roles in the justice system.

For these reasons, the Judicial Council is pleased to sponsor AB 223.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mureed Rasool at 916-323-3121.

Sincerely,



Cory T. Jasperson
Director
Governmental Affairs

CTJ/MR/lmm

cc: Members, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hon. Blanca Pacheco, Member of the Assembly, 64th District
Mr. Christian Kurpiewski, Deputy Chief Counsel, Senate Judiciary Committee
Mr. Daryl Thomas, Consultant, Assembly Republican Office of Policy and Budget
Mr. Jith Meganathan, Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of the Governor
Ms. Michelle Curran, Administrative Director, Judicial Council of California



Judicial Council of California

520 Capitol Mall, Suite 600 · Sacramento, California 95814-4717

Telephone 916-323-3121 · Fax 916-323-4347

PATRICIA GUERRERO
Chief Justice of California
Chair of the Judicial Council

MICHELLE CURRAN
Administrative Director

February 25, 2025

Hon. Ash Kalra
Assembly Judiciary Committee
1020 N Street, Room 104
Sacramento, CA 95814

Subject: Assembly Bill 223 (Pacheco), as introduced—Sponsor
Hearing: Assembly Judiciary Committee—March 4, 2025

Dear Assemblymember Kalra:

The Judicial Council is pleased to sponsor Assembly Bill 223 (Pacheco) which makes plain language revisions to the juror and prospective juror oaths obtained from the jury panel prior to the examination of prospective trial jurors assigned for voir dire and after the completion of selection of trial jurors. This proposal is comprised of technical amendments, and otherwise leaves the substance of the oaths intact.

Under existing law, jurors generally must take an oath at two different stages of a trial. The first oath they must take occurs prior to jury selection, in which they agree to accurately and truthfully answer all questions concerning their qualifications and competency to serve as a trial juror. The second oath occurs right after jury selection is over; jurors must acknowledge that they will consider the case before them, and reach a verdict based only on the evidence and the court's instructions.

Code of Civil Procedure section 232 sets forth the express text of the oaths that must be read to jurors. The statutory language uses words and phrases that may be outdated or unfamiliar for those serving on a jury. For example, the juror selection oath requires jurors to acknowledge that they will truthfully answer all questions “propounded” to them concerning their qualifications and competency. The other oath requires jurors to agree that they will “well and truly try the cause now pending before this court, and a true verdict render” according to the evidence and court

instructions. Such language can serve as a barrier that limits a juror's ability to understand the oaths and the duties that they are agreeing to carry out.

AB 223 makes narrowly tailored revisions to the oaths so that jurors can better understand them. Using plain language when interacting with juries has been a longstanding goal for the Judicial Council. Both a Blue Ribbon Commission on Jury System Improvement from 1996, and a Task Force on Jury System Improvement from 2004, suggested that plain language instructions be given to jurors. While the suggestion to use plain language was adopted in the context of jury instructions, the statute governing juror oaths has remained untouched since 1989. This bill continues the task of using plain language in the jury context, so that jurors can more readily fulfill their roles in the justice system.

For these reasons, the Judicial Council is pleased to sponsor AB 223.

Should you have any questions or require additional information, please contact Mureed Rasool at 916-323-3121.

Sincerely,



Cory T. Jaspersen
Director
Governmental Affairs

CTJ/MR/lmm

cc: Members, Assembly Judiciary Committee
Hon. Blanca Pacheco, Member of the Assembly, 64th District
Alison Merrilees, Chief Counsel, Assembly Public Safety Committee
Daryl Thomas, Consultant, Assembly Republican Office of Policy and Budget
Jith Meganathan, Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary, Office of the Governor
Michelle Curran, Administrative Director, Judicial Council of California