



# Judicial Council of California

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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 The statutory language uses words and phrases that may be outdated or unfamiliar for those serving on a jury.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

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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/Imm

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