

Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,

A "Letter to the Editor", written by Blue Lake resident Arthur C. Jones, appeared in the June twentieth edition of the Times-Standard. The subject was "Age Limit for Jurors Would be Nice". Mr. Jones states that he and his wife are over seventy five years old, that they have each received a jury summons, and that they are feeling the effects of old age which includes increased loss of memory and hearing. I just happen to be over the age of eighty and can agree with Mr. Jones stated feelings. The only thing that I cannot agree with is his statement referring to age as a factor in a jury of one's peers. For instance, a thirty year old person is not meant to be tried by a panel of thirty year old peers. I don't know if there is an age cutoff for prospective jurors in other counties, but there does not seem to be one in Humboldt County. The affidavit for a prospective juror contains a request for disqualification of jury duty. The request does not include excuses for age or medical status, only "deceased". The section, requesting deferment of jury duty, does include a medical appointment. The medical excuse section is very detailed and asks the physician when the patient will be well enough to serve. I find no place on the form that allows a physician to request a medical excuse for a patient who may be permanently incapacitated to serve as a juror. As a senior citizen, I can feel for those who have medical problems that are not completely debilitating but do cause limited sitting and or standing or loss of memory or lack of concentration. I can understand why there is no specific age disqualification. Some of us are not as senile or physically challenged as others. Is it really fair to place an elderly prospective juror in the position where he or she has to stand before an audience and describe their physical and mental shortcomings? As for myself, I have served my time on juries in Humboldt County except for the early years of my eligibility when I was a Eureka Volunteer Fireman. As such I was exempt from jury duty for a period of years. In days gone by, with small crews of paid firemen and large crews of volunteers, a volunteer had to be more readily available due to possible major fires. I have always felt that a person should serve in the capacity of a juror. It is part of our rights as a citizen and a service to the community. But, like everything else, there is a limit. The availability of a medical request for permanent disqualification from jury duty should save money. Why call back a prospective juror repeatedly when you know the person's medical problems are permanent?

Fred Nelson for Community Comment