

## How all-white juries taint confidence in Minn. courts

**Result:** About two months after my investigation was published, several of my sources reached out to me to let me know that Third Judicial District Chief Judge Joseph Buelteel ordered a change to the jury selection process.

The July order was in response to concerns that the racial makeup of juries is nowhere near reflecting Minnesota's diversity.

Buelteel's order is historic. Two attorneys I interviewed said this is the first time, as far as they know, that a Minnesota chief judge has used this authority, even though the precedent is written into law.

Minnesota Court Rule 806 states that, "if the chief judge, or designee, determines that improvement is needed in either the inclusiveness of the jury source list or the representativeness of the jury pool, appropriate corrective action shall be ordered."

Buelteel's order requires jury summons and questionnaire forms in the Third District, which includes Rochester, to be translated into languages other than English, such as Spanish, Somali, Hmong and Karen and to have these made available online.

It also edits the language on the form to clarify that there is no exact level of English language skill required, and instead jurors should come to court to discuss their eligibility with the judge if they are unsure.

This development is largely the result of a [formal letter](#) sent in April to Buelteel from the Third District's Committee for Equity and Justice. The letter, which stated that people of color are substantially underrepresented at every stage of the jury selection process, requested Buelteel take action to "ameliorate the glaring and long-standing racial disparities."

Two sources I interviewed, who co-wrote the letter, said my reporting was instrumental in getting eyes on this issue and helped push Buelteel to issue corrective action.

I wrote a follow up story: [Rochester district judge issues 'corrective action' to improve jury pool formation](#)