

IN THE IOWA DISTRICT COURT FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY

STATE OF IOWA,
Plaintiff,

vs.

JOSEPH CHRISTOPHER NORRIS,
Defendant.

Case No. FECR012514

JURY INSTRUCTIONS

MEMBERS OF THE JURY

In this case, the Court gives you the following instructions:

INSTRUCTION NO. 1

The Trial Information charges the defendant, JOSEPH CHRISTOPHER NORRIS, with one count of First-Degree Election Misconduct.

INSTRUCTION NO. 2

The defendant, JOSEPH CHRISTOPHER NORRIS, has entered a plea of not guilty. The plea of not guilty is a complete denial of the charges and places the burden on the State to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. Whenever I instruct you that the State must prove something, it must be by evidence beyond a reasonable doubt. If the State does not prove the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt, your verdict must be not guilty.

INSTRUCTION NO. 3

The Trial Information is the document that formally charges the defendant with a crime and is merely the method by which the defendant is brought into Court for trial. It is not evidence.

INSTRUCTION NO. 4

The defendant is presumed innocent and not guilty. This presumption of innocence requires you to put aside all suspicion which might arise from the defendant's arrest, charge, or present situation. The presumption of innocence remains with the defendant throughout the trial unless the evidence establishes his guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

INSTRUCTION NO. 5

You shall base your verdict only upon the evidence and these instructions.

Evidence is:

1. Testimony in person or by deposition.
2. Exhibits received by the court. You may examine the exhibits closely, but be careful not to alter or destroy them.
3. Stipulations, which are agreements between the attorneys.

Facts may be proved by direct evidence, circumstantial evidence, or a combination of both.

Sometimes, during a trial, references are made to pre-trial statements and reports, witnesses' depositions, or other miscellaneous items. Only those things formally offered and received by the court are available to you during your deliberations. Documents or items read from or referred to, which were not offered and received into evidence, are not available to you.

The following are not evidence:

1. Statements, arguments, questions and comments by the lawyers.
2. Objections and rulings on objections.
3. Any testimony I told you to disregard.
4. Anything you saw or heard about this case outside the courtroom.

INSTRUCTION NO. 6

In considering the evidence, make deductions and reach conclusions according to reason and common sense. Facts may be proved by direct evidence, circumstantial evidence, or both.

Direct evidence is evidence from a witness who claims actual knowledge of a fact, such as an eyewitness.

Circumstantial evidence is evidence about a chain of facts which show a defendant is guilty or not guilty.

The law does not distinguish between direct evidence and circumstantial evidence. Give all the evidence the weight and value you think it is entitled to receive.

INSTRUCTION NO. 7

Decide the facts from the evidence. Consider the evidence using your observations, reasoning, common sense, and experience. It is your duty to determine the credibility of witnesses, to resolve any conflicts in the evidence, and to draw reasonable inferences from the evidence.

In determining the facts, you may have to decide what testimony you believe. You may believe all, part, or none of any witness's testimony.

There are many factors which you may consider in deciding what testimony to believe, for example:

1. Whether the testimony is reasonable and consistent with other evidence you believe.
2. Whether a witness has made inconsistent statements.
3. The witness's appearance, conduct, age, intelligence, memory and knowledge of the facts.
4. The witness's interest in the trial, their motive, candor, bias and prejudice.

Try to reconcile any conflicts in the evidence; but if you cannot, accept any evidence you find believable and give it the weight you believe it deserves.

Whether the State has met its burden of proof does not depend on the number of witnesses it has called or upon the number of exhibits it has offered, but upon the nature and quality of the evidence presented.

INSTRUCTION NO. 8

You must determine whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty from the evidence and the law in these instructions. My duty is to tell you what the law is. Your duty is to accept and apply this law and to decide all fact questions.

You must consider all the instructions together. No single instruction includes all the applicable law.

As you consider the evidence, do not be influenced by any personal sympathy, bias, prejudices or emotions. It is common to have hidden or implicit thoughts that help us form our opinions. You are making very important decisions in this case. You must evaluate the evidence carefully. You must avoid decisions based on things such as generalizations, gut feelings, prejudices, fears, sympathies, stereotypes, or inward or outward biases.

The law demands that you return a just verdict, based solely on the evidence, your reason and common sense, and these instructions. As jurors, your sole duty is to find the truth and do justice.

INSTRUCTION NO. 9

Nothing I have said or done during the trial was intended to give any opinion on the facts, proof, or what your verdict should be.

INSTRUCTION NO. 10

The burden is on the State to prove the defendant, Joseph Christopher Norris, guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

A reasonable doubt is one that fairly and naturally arises from the evidence in the case, or from the lack or failure of evidence the State produced.

If, after full and fair consideration of all the evidence, you are firmly convinced of the defendant's guilt, then you have no reasonable doubt and you should find the defendant guilty.

But if, after a full and fair consideration of all the evidence in the case, or from the lack or failure of evidence the State produced, you are not firmly convinced of the defendant's guilt, then you have a reasonable doubt and you should find the defendant not guilty.

INSTRUCTION NO. 11

The duty of the jury is to determine whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty. In the event of a guilty verdict, you have nothing to do with punishment.

INSTRUCTION NO. 12

Evidence has been offered to show the defendant made statements at an earlier time and place. If you find the defendant made any of those statements, you may consider them as evidence and use the statements to help you decide whether you believe him.

INSTRUCTION NO. 13

To commit a crime a person must intend to do an act which is against the law. While it is not necessary that a person knows the act is against the law, it is necessary that the person was aware he was doing the act and he did it voluntarily, not by mistake or accident.

You may, but are not required to, conclude a person intends the natural results of their acts.

INSTRUCTION NO. 14

The Trial Information charges the defendant with one count of First-Degree Election Misconduct. To prove the defendant guilty of First-Degree Election Misconduct, the State must prove the following elements:

1. On or about November 5, 2024, in Montgomery County, Iowa, Joseph Christopher Norris was an election official.
2. Norris willfully performed his duties and responsibilities as an election official prescribed by chapters 39 through 53 of the Iowa Code.
3. He did so in such a way as to hinder or disregard the object of the law.

If the State has proven all these elements, the defendant is guilty of First-Degree Election Misconduct. If the State has failed to prove any of the elements, then the defendant is not guilty.

INSTRUCTION NO. 15

For purposes of this case and as used in Instruction No. 14, an “election official” includes a precinct election official appointed to serve on the Absentee and Special Voters Precinct Board.

INSTRUCTION NO. 16

For purposes of this case and Instruction No. 14, the word “willfully” means intentional or by fixed design or purpose and not accidental.

INSTRUCTION NO. 17

As used in Instruction No. 14, the “object of the law” governing the counting of absentee ballots is to ensure that all valid absentee ballots are accurately counted, that the secrecy of the ballots is preserved, and that the count is completed in an orderly and timely manner, consistent with the governing rules.

INSTRUCTION NO. 18

You may consider Exhibit L2, the Absentee and Special Voters Precinct Board Guide, only as it relates to what Defendant knew, understood, or believed. You may not use the guide to determine whether the Auditor, the Board, or any other person complied with or violated Iowa election law.

INSTRUCTION NO. 19

During the trial, you have been allowed to take notes. You may take these with you to the jury room to use in your deliberations. Remember, these are notes and not evidence. Generally, they reflect the recollection or impressions of the evidence as viewed by the person taking them and may be inaccurate or incomplete.

After reaching a verdict, leave your notes in the jury room and they will be destroyed.

INSTRUCTION NO. 20

When you begin deliberating, you should select a foreperson. They must see that your deliberations are carried out in an orderly manner, that the issues are fully and freely discussed, and that every juror has an opportunity to express their views.

To return a verdict, each juror must agree to it. Your verdict must also be unanimous.

It is your duty as jurors to consult one another and reach an agreement, if you can do so without compromising your own judgment. Each of you must decide the case for yourself, but do so only after an impartial consideration of the evidence with the other jurors.

During your deliberations, do not hesitate to re-examine your view and change your opinion if convinced it is wrong. But do not change your opinion as to the weight or effect of the evidence just because it is the opinion of the other jurors, or for the mere purpose of returning a verdict.

Remember, you are judges of the facts. Your sole duty is to find the truth and do justice.

INSTRUCTION NO. 21

Occasionally, after a jury retires to the jury room, the members have questions. I have prepared the instructions after carefully considering this case with the lawyers and the defendant. I have tried to use language which is generally understandable. Usually, questions about instructions can be answered by carefully re-reading them. If, however, any of you feel it necessary to ask a question, you must do so in writing and deliver the question to the court attendant. I cannot communicate with you without first discussing your question and the potential answer with the lawyers and the defendant. This process naturally takes time and deliberation before I can reply.

If a question is submitted, the foreperson must read my response to the jury. Please keep any written question and my response and return it to the Court with the verdict.

The Court Attendant who has been working with me on this case is in the same position as I am. Please do not put that person on the spot by asking him or her any questions. You should direct any questions to the court and not to the court attendant.

INSTRUCTION NO. 22

You may not communicate about this case before reaching your verdict. This includes via cell phone and electronic media such as text messages, email, electronic messaging applications, and any social media platform including, but not limited to, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, X, TikTok, Instagram, or Snapchat.

Do not do any research or make any investigation into this case on your own. Do not visit or view any place discussed in this case, and do not use internet or application-based maps or programs, or any other application, program, or device to search for or view any place discussed in the testimony. Also, do not research any information about this case, the law, or the people involved, including the parties, the witnesses, the lawyers, or the judge. This includes using the Internet to research events or people referenced in the trial.

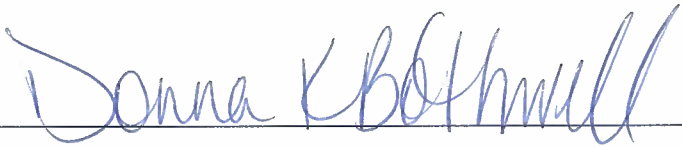
This case will be tried on evidence presented in the courtroom. If you conduct independent research, you will be relying on matters not presented in court. The parties have a right to have this case decided on the evidence they know about and that has been introduced here in court. If you do some research or investigation or experiment that we do not know about, then your verdict may be influenced by inaccurate, incomplete, or misleading information that has not been tested by the trial process, including the oath to tell the truth and by cross-examination. All of the parties are entitled to a fair trial, rendered by an impartial jury, and you must conduct yourself to maintain the integrity of the trial process. If you decide a case based on information not presented in court, you will have denied the parties a fair trial in accordance with the rules of this state and you will have done an injustice. It is very important that you abide by these rules.

It is important that we have your full and undivided attention during trial.

INSTRUCTION NO. 23

I am giving you one verdict form. When you have agreed upon a verdict and the foreperson has signed the verdict form, please notify the Court Attendant.

Dated this 8 day of October, 2026.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Donna K Bothwell", written over a horizontal line.

Judge, Donna K. Bothwell
Fourth Judicial District of Iowa