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## **House Bill 315**

### **“An Act relating to juries in criminal cases; and providing for an effective date.”**

Before one is able to understand why jury nullification is a good idea, one must understand the importance of a trial by jury. Our Founding Fathers considered them to be a powerful weapon in the war against tyranny. Thomas Jefferson wrote, “I consider trial by jury as the only anchor yet imagined by man, by which a government can be held to the principles of its constitution”. In the *Federalist Papers*, Alexander Hamilton wrote that trial by jury was the “very palladium of free government” and a “valuable check upon corruption”.

Given the strength of these opinions, then, it is no surprise that the denial of trials by jury was one of the foremost acts of despotism listed by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence.

As for the concept that juries have not only the power but the obligation to nullify unjust rulings of a judge, John Adams wrote, “It is not only (the juror’s) right, but his duty . . . to find the verdict according to his own best understanding, judgment, and conscience, though in direct opposition to the direction of the court”.

Our Founding Fathers zealously defended this right and recognized that only an informed and empowered jury could effectively protect a defendant from the potentially harmful effects of autocratic judges. Jury nullification allows citizens to have the final say on what is fair in a court of law.

Therefore, I ask for your support of HB 315. Jury nullification is a good idea and one supported by Constitutional principles of freedom.