

IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF HINDS COUNTY,
THE FIFTH CHANCERY COURT DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI

IN RE: THE NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

3/26/20 STATEMENT REGARDING COURT OPERATIONS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has determined that COVID-19 presents a serious public health threat. Consequently, the President of the United States has declared a national emergency. The Governor of Mississippi declared a state of emergency. The Hinds County Board of Supervisors has declared a state of emergency. Domestic and foreign health authorities have issued guidance to citizens and visitors within their respective jurisdictions, both recommending and mandating precautionary measures to defend against the spread of COVID-19. The Mississippi Supreme Court has issued various emergency administrative orders in response to the virus, which the Fifth Chancery Court District will adhere to.

In compliance with the Constitution, Hinds Chancery Court will remain open for business to ensure courts fulfill their constitutional and statutory duties. See Miss. Const. Art. 3, §§ 24, 25, 26, and 26A. Mindful of the Court's duty to ensure the "just, speedy, and inexpensive determination of every action and proceeding" as well as its duty to protect parties, court staff, witnesses, corporate representatives, and practitioners who appear before it and the community in which it sits, the Fifth Chancery Court District **is continuing all matters set through April 10, 2020, effective immediately**. Emergency matters will be heard as necessary. Only necessary persons will be permitted in courtrooms. Ex parte matters will be handled via email, teleconference, and/or video conference (utilizing Zoom). For more information or to re-set a matter, please contact the appropriate court administrator by email or telephone. The court administrators will have access to their voice mail and email during this time. For cases assigned to Judge Owens and Judge Thomas, contact Tonya W. Anderson at tanderson@co.hinds.ms.us or by telephone at 601.714.6309. For cases assigned to Judge Wise Martin and Judge Grove, contact D. LaShae Gilmore at dgilmore@co.hinds.ms.us or by telephone at 601.968.6521.

For cases set between April 13, 2020, through May 15, 2020, each Judge will exercise their sound discretion with regard to their own docket. Continuances may be granted should any party, attorney or witness request a continuance because of COVID-19. All court proceedings shall be limited to attorneys, parties, witnesses, security officers, members of the press, and other necessary persons, as determined by the trial judge. Furthermore, we anticipate ex parte matters will only be handled via teleconference and/or email.

We recognize the quickly changing combat of COVID-19 and this requires the Court's response to be fluid. The information set forth above is subject to change.