

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF
HINDS COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

IN RE: COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE
EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED
BY COVID-19 AND RELATED CORONAVIRUS

GENERAL ORDER 14-9001
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This General Order is being issued in response to the recent outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the United States and COVID-19's projected invasion of Hinds County. As of the date of this Order, COVID-19 has been declared a "global pandemic" in the face of a "ballooning" number of active cases of the Coronavirus throughout the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") and the World Health Organization ("WHO") reports and predictions indicate that the number of confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis are expected to continue to increase at a rapid pace. Both agencies are recommending "self-quarantines" for large parts of the United States. Prominent and intelligent scientists and researchers agree that COVID-19 will cause many Americans flu like symptoms, but many other Americans with COVID-19 will face serious health risks health problems and illnesses, to include death. Businesses, large conventions and sporting events are being suspended indefinitely. Schools and universities are closing in a desperate attempt to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Hospitals and medical centers in America are preparing for the "worst possible scenarios" to include, illnesses of both patients AND health providers /caregivers.

In February of 2020, the CDC issued an "Interim Guidance" recommendation that all employers consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19, including the review of guidance from state and local health officials. *See, Interim Guidance for Business and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 COVID-19 (February 2020) (last updated February 26, 2020); cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-response.html (last updated February 11, 2020).*

On March 5, 2020, Public Health Professionals in Seattle, Washington & King County issued a recommendation that individuals at higher risk (i.e., those over 60, those with underlying conditions, those who are pregnant) stay at home and away from large groups of

people. Employers were also advised to maximize telecommuting and to feasibly avoid bringing large groups of people together.

Given the significant number of identified and projected cases of COVID-19 in Hinds County and the severity of risks posed to the public, detainees being held in our jails, detention employees, patrol officers, vendors and contractors and given the above public health recommendations from local, state and national governmental authorities, it hereby ORDERED that, effective Monday, March 16, 2020:

1. All civil and criminal matters scheduled for an in-Court appearance before any circuit judge in Hinds County are hereby **CONTINUED**, pending further order of the Court;
2. All grand jury proceedings are hereby **CONTINUED** until further order of the Court;
3. With regard to civil and criminal matters and the Court's inability to measure the health status and medical spectrum of potential jurors, witnesses and spectators and the Court's inability to know the effect of the above public health recommendations or the availability of law enforcement officials and attorneys representing litigants, and the court staff required to be present in the courtroom, the herein Court specifically finds that the ends of justice will be served by entering the herein order, inasmuch as the best interests of the public's health and safety outweighs any potential adverse effect of the herein continuances imposed upon any party;
4. This Order shall not restrict any judge's authority to conduct a case-by-case exception to the herein ordered continuances when reviewing or considering non-jury trials, after conferring with all counsel of record;
5. This Order does not affect or impede any judge's consideration of civil and criminal motions that can be resolved by the Court, without oral argument or in court appearances. Nor does this order preclude telephonic conference set by any court to resolve court matters;
6. During the term of this General Order, the Hinds County Sheriff, the Hinds County Board of Supervisors and the Hinds County Circuit Clerk, along with the jail detainees' medical/health providers, local and state health departments' medical care providers and policy makers, and other relevant state and local COVID-19 stakeholders, shall develop/establish health protocols to safeguard employees, jail detainees and the general public;
7. The Seventh Circuit Court remains open. Staff in the Circuit Clerks' Office will be available as directed by the Circuit Clerk. Mail will be received and the Circuit Clerk's Office

will remain open for filings. Electronic filing may still be made on the Court's Mississippi Electronic Court ("MEC") system. The public is encouraged to continue utilizing the Circuit Clerk's Office so long as they follow the directives of the clerk, as well as all applicable public health guidelines.

The herein General Order shall become effective on Monday, March 16, 2020 and shall expire on Friday April 3, 2020, unless extended by a supplemental order of the Court. Additionally, any section of this order which conflicts with any order of the Mississippi Supreme Court, any state law or any directives of any local, state or federal Court or governmental healthcare or public safety agency shall conform to requirement of said entities or agencies.

SO ORDERED, this the 12TH day of March 2020.



SENIOR CIRCUIT JUDGE