

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS

IN RE: COURT OPERATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 2020-1

This Administrative Order is being issued in response to the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in the United States. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued interim guidance recommending that all employers consider how best to decrease the spread of COVID-19, including a plan to minimize exposure between employees and the public. On March 11, 2020, the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization. On March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a National Emergency. As of this date, 16 cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed within the State of Arkansas. Guidance from public health officials states that one of the most effective ways to protect against the spread of this disease is to limit exposure, particularly to persons at higher risk of developing serious COVID-19 illness.

Considering the severity of risk posed to the public, court staff, and other court agencies, in addition to the recommendations from public health officials, the following protocol will be implemented within the Western District of Arkansas effective March 17, 2020, through and including at least May 1, 2020, in all of the Court's divisions:

1) All civil and criminal trials (bench and jury) are hereby continued and will be rescheduled by the presiding judge to a date after May 1, 2020. Questions concerning filing deadlines should be directed to the presiding judge.

2) For criminal trials, delay caused by the implementation of this Administrative Order will

be excluded under the Speedy Trial Act pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §3161(h)(7)(A), as the Court specifically finds that the ends of justice served by ordering these continuances outweigh the best interests of the public and any defendant's right to a speedy trial.

3) Criminal matters before a Magistrate Judge, such as initial appearances, arraignments, detention hearings, and the issuance of search warrants shall continue to take place as scheduled or by video conference at the discretion of the presiding judge until further order of the Court.

4) Change of plea and sentencing hearings shall continue to take place as scheduled or by video conference at the discretion of the presiding judge until further order of the Court.

5) All civil hearings and other court proceedings, including settlement conferences, will take place as scheduled or by video conference at the discretion of the presiding judge until further order of the Court.

6) All petty offense (CVB) proceedings are continued until further order of the Court.

7) All grand jury proceedings in the District are continued until further order of the Court.


8) The naturalization ceremony scheduled for April 10, 2020, at the Walmart Museum in Bentonville, Arkansas is cancelled and will be rescheduled at a later date.

9) This Administrative Order does not affect the Court's consideration of civil and criminal motions that can be resolved without oral argument or handled by telephone or video conference.

10) At this time, the courthouses in the Western District of Arkansas will remain open with limited services available. Admittance into the courthouses will be subject to screening by United States Marshal Service (USMS) personnel and USMS-Deputized contract Court Security Officers. Electronic filings may continue to be made through the CM/ECF system. The public is encouraged to use online Court resources or contact the Court by telephone.

This Administrative Order will remain in effect until further order of the Court.

IT IS SO ORDERED, this 16th day of March, 2020



SUSAN O. HICKEY
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE