

IN RE: BUSINESS OF THE COURT

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS FOR THE 26TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COLUMBIA / MONTOUR COUNTIES PENNSYLVANIA

**PANDEMIC EMERGENCY OPERATIONAL ORDER**

*C.V. 1-2020*

CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT COUNTY OF COLLEGE

2020 MAR 16 10:00 AM

PROthonary

CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT COUNTY OF COLLEGE

2020 MAR 17 AM 9:06

**DECLARATION and ORDER**

AND NOW, this 16<sup>TH</sup> day of March, 2020, per the Supreme Court's Order dated March 16, 2020, for the health and safety of the court personnel, court users, and the general public, I declare a judicial emergency in the Twenty-Sixth (26<sup>th</sup>) Judicial District for the following period: March 16, 2020 to April 14, 2020. As information and science concerning the pandemic continue to evolve, this order may be subject to amendment and extension. The Court will continue operations and accessibility to the public in the interest of justice, order, and safety. See Pa.R.J.A. 1951 et seq.

**Furthermore,** the court orders the following specific directives:

1. The operation of Rule of Criminal Procedure 600 shall be suspended in the 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District during the period of the local judicial emergency. The purport of the suspension will be that the time period of the local judicial emergency and any extensions or renewals shall be

excluded from the time computation under Rule of Criminal Procedure 600 (C). Nothing in this Order or its local implementation shall affect a criminal defendant's right to a speedy trial under the United States Constitution and Pennsylvania Constitution, albeit that the circumstances giving rise to this Order and the suspension may be relevant to the constitutional analysis.

2. The trial court jury terms in the 26th Judicial District of Columbia/Montour Counties are hereby canceled through June 1, 2020. The Court will review this Order as matters evolve.
3. Specifically, hearings involving inmates in local (county) or state prisons will be addressed via electronic technology.
4. Court days shall be scheduled to minimize the number of people gathering at one time and one place.
5. Time calculations for the purposes of time computation relevant to court cases or other judicial business, as well as time deadlines, are suspended, subject to constitutional restrictions, except appeals which shall be timely filed.
6. Advanced communication technology (videoconferencing, telephonic conferencing, etc.) shall be maximized to conduct court proceedings, subject to constitutional restrictions.

7. The court will maximize and encourage phone conferences in lieu of office conferences.
8. In order to minimize people entering the court offices, court documents may be filed with the prothonotary/clerk of courts electronically by email or other electronic means. Filing shall be at the time of receipt by the prothonotary/clerk of courts. It is encouraged that hard copies of the electronic filings be mailed to the prothonotary/clerk of court's office timely after electronic transmission.
9. All court personnel and staff shall actively direct and promote social distancing and safe hygiene and health habits.
10. All District Judges shall be subject to and shall implement these procedures to the degree applicable.
11. The President Judge and the Court Administrator will meet and confer regularly with court department chiefs and other personnel to review internal procedures and evolving needs. Suggestions from Court staff and county leaders and the AOPC are welcome. Efforts will be coordinated with the counties and the AOPC.
12. The Court may take any other appropriate action permitted pursuant to Rule of Judicial Administration 1952 (B) (2), upon notice to litigants and to the public.

