

STATE OF LOUISIANA
PARISH OF CADDO
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

In Re:

COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE
EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES
CREATED BY COVID-A9 (CORONAVIRUS)

SUPPLEMENTAL AND EXTENDING ORDER

The judges of the First Judicial District Court, in light of the recent public health issues arising from the spread of COVID-19 throughout the world, and in recognition that there have been documented cases within the state of Louisiana, are issuing the following order to safeguard public health while respecting the rights of litigants and provide the greatest possible access to the courts during this event. The Governor has declared a public health emergency and the Chief Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court has recommended that courts “restrict court settings to emergency and time-sensitive settings.”

Therefore, continuing and lasting through and including May 1, 2020 the following orders are in place:

GENERAL ORDERS:

Effective immediately, the following persons shall not enter the First Judicial District courthouse:

- Persons who have travelled to any of the following countries within the last 14 days: CHINA, SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN, ITALY, IRAN (This list may be updated as further guidance is received.);
- Persons who reside or have had close contact with someone who has travelled to one of the countries listed above within the last 14 days;
- Persons who have been asked to self-quarantine by any doctor, hospital or health agency;
- Persons who have been diagnosed with, or have had contact with, anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- Persons exhibiting symptoms unusual to you that are among the CDC-identified symptoms (these have been identified as fever, cough or shortness of breath).
- COURTHOUSE HOURS and ACCEPTANCE OF COURT FILINGS: In recognition of the health concerns of maintaining a full staff at all normal operating hours, the Court

finds that it is unsafe for the Clerk of Court to perform their official duties and for the general public to conduct business with the clerk's office at full capacity and normal hours;

- THEREFORE, the Clerk of Court for the First Judicial District is hereby granted approval and is authorized to order the closing of his office from 1.p.m. until 5p.m. each day. Pursuant to La. R.S. 1:55(E)(2)(3), all days or parts of days of closure of said clerk's office are deemed legal holidays.
- The Chief Judge may designate other hours of operations by written order.
- All restrictions for entering the courthouse for filings remain in place.
- No members of the public other than judges and their immediate and authorized staff shall be permitted to enter the courthouse outside of those hours. The court authorizes federal court judges and employees to enter the courthouse as necessary to facilitate their use of district court facilities for their hearings.

ANYONE ATTEMPTING TO ENTER IN VIOLATION OF THESE PROTOCOLS WILL BE DENIED ENTRY BY A COURT SECURITY OFFICER.

If you have a scheduled hearing or you have other business inside the courthouse, and you are unable to enter because of the restrictions listed above, you should proceed as follows:

- Contact the Clerk of Court, (318) 226-6785 for civil matters or (318) 226-6786 who will be able to assist you;
- If you are represented by an attorney, please contact your attorney.

CRIMINAL MATTERS:

All criminal trials, hearings, and court appearances are hereby continued, to be reset by order, except for the following:

The following criminal matters are NOT continued by this order.

- First appearances (72 hour hearings or "jail clearance");
- Bond hearings, including hearings for bond revocation and hearings to set bond;
- Protective order hearings;
- Arraignments for incarcerated persons, which shall be conducted by video whenever possible;
- Probation revocation hearings when the defendant is in custody.

The court finds that the delays created by the implementation of this order constitute “just cause” pursuant to the provisions of La. Code of Criminal Procedure Art. 701 as it pertains to statutory speedy trial delays. Further, given the concerns of litigants, witnesses, and jurors, the court finds that the interests of justice warrant continuances in all matters not specifically excepted.

CIVIL MATTERS

All civil trials, hearings and court appearances are hereby continued, to be reset by order with the following exceptions:

THE FOLLOWING CIVIL MATTERS ARE **NOT** CONTINUED BY THIS ORDER:

- Civil protective orders;
- Emergency child custody matters pursuant to La. Code of Civil Procedure Art. 3945;
- Emergency interdictions;
- Public health matters related to the current health emergency;
- Civil commitments where the party is in continued involuntary custody;
- Any matter in which a rule to show cause is granted after the moving party sets forth written grounds why the matter should proceed despite the above concerns and that rule is set for hearing by the court.

The Clerk of Court is directed that matters may be placed on a court’s docket for consent judgment or confirmation of preliminary default judgments only after the judge’s office has approved the setting.

The court finds that in all matters not excepted above that the current health emergency constitutes good grounds for continuance of the matters under Louisiana Civil Code Article 1601.

ALL MATTERS

Any party or counsel representing a party who is scheduled to appear for a matter that is not continued during the above period and who is at high risk from potential exposure to COVID-19 should contact opposing counsel and the staff of the respective judge regarding that

risk. Similar courtesies should be extended if any witnesses are known to have particular vulnerabilities.

In matters not continued by the above order, counsel intending to present matters requiring the testimony of multiple witnesses shall contact opposing counsel and the court to determine scheduling and if the matter should be continued or if witnesses can be directed to appear on an “as needed” basis to decrease congestion in the courthouse.

This order shall be posted on the website of the Clerk of Court and distributed to regional media outlets upon approval.

Signed this 22nd day of April, 2020, in Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana.



Chief Judge Robert P. Waddell
On behalf of the Court