

STATE OF LOUISIANA  
PARISH OF CADDO  
FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT

In Re:

RESUMPTION OF COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE  
EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES  
CREATED BY COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)

**May 13, 2020 AMENDING 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 Louisiana Supreme Court's orders closing state courts for all but emergency or constitutionally essential functions will have expired effective May 18, 2020. The Louisiana Supreme Court has further disseminated recommendations from the Louisiana District Judges Association and the Administrative Office of the Federal Judiciary regarding the re-opening of courts. These recommendations all emphasize the importance of maintaining space between persons in public spaces, particularly indoors, the benefit of face-covering masks to both their wearers and others, and the benefits of screening people entering confined areas with others.

Therefore, beginning May 18, 2020, the following en banc orders are in place to facilitate the safest possible resumption of general court operations for the First Judicial District Court:

**GENERAL ORDERS:**

Continuing from previous orders, 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).
- Persons with a fever over 99 degrees Fahrenheit. Courthouse security is instructed and ordered to take the temperature of all members of the public through the least intrusive means that is safe for security personnel. Persons refusing consent to the procedure shall be denied entry.

#### COURTHOUSE OPERATIONS:

- In recognition of the continuing situation, the Clerk of Court for the First Judicial District is hereby granted continued approval and authorization to order the closing of his office to the public 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.
- The Clerk of Court may restrict the number of persons entering his office for filings in any manner consistent with the safety and health of the public and his staff.
- Prior orders restricting access of the public to the courthouse are hereby lifted. However, entrants should be made aware through signage that seating in the courtrooms will be limited by further provisions of this order and that congregation in the common spaces of the courthouse in large groups will not be permitted.
- All members of the public entering the courthouse shall wear a mask covering their nose and mouth at all times unless instructed to remove it by courthouse security or court staff. Any courthouse employees having contact with the public shall wear a mask covering their nose and mouth at any time they are in contact with the public, subject to the instructions of the individual judges in facilitating the operation of their courtrooms. Any persons not having a mask upon arrival at the courthouse will be provided a mask by security personnel by agreement of the Caddo Parish Sheriff.
- All persons denied entry for refusal to wear a mask or exhibiting a symptom or giving a prohibited answer to the questions upon entry shall be provided with a supplemental notice ordering them to return on a future date and the fact of their appearance and the reason they were refused entry shall be documented. The court shall provide notices and a log to be used for this purpose.
- **COURTROOM OCCUPANCY.** No courtroom shall be permitted to contain, in the public gallery, more people than constitute 25% of its public seating capacity. Priority shall be given to litigants with business before the court. Masks shall continue to be

worn unless the court gives leave to remove the mask (for example, to counsel making argument, to witnesses offering testimony or other situations in the judge's discretion.)

- Courts will strive to accomplish this goal of limited courtroom presence by the use of video court means, by staggering the times for the appearance of litigants, and continuing matters that are not time-sensitive in favor of those that are. These approaches are consistent with federal and state recommendations.
- **PUBLIC ACCESS.** Each judge shall provide for designated seating for members of the press or public who wish to attend court proceedings, although such seating will be limited and set at the discretion of the court. Parties with interest in a particular proceeding should contact the office of the presiding judge in advance of court if special accommodations are required. All courts shall strive to preserve public access to the courts while protecting public safety.

### **CRIMINAL MATTERS:**

The court continues to find 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. Jury trials are currently prohibited by the Louisiana Supreme Court through at least the end of June 2020.

### **CIVIL MATTERS**

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. This is to confirm that dockets may comport with the court's order regarding courtroom occupancy.

The court finds that the current health emergency continues to be a factor for the court's consideration in what constitutes good grounds for continuance of the all matters under Louisiana Civil Code Article 1601 to the extent that any continuance is necessary to comply with these orders.

### **ALL MATTERS**

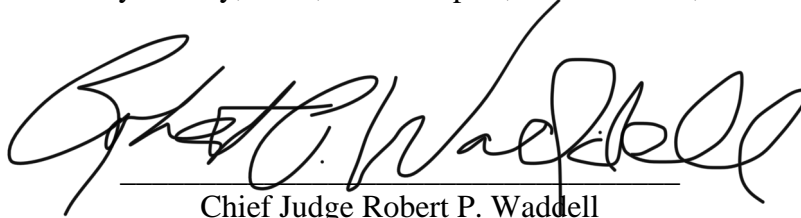
Any party or counsel representing a party who is scheduled to appear during the next two months and who is at high risk from potential exposure to COVID-19 should contact opposing

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 all matters set and not otherwise addressed or continued by the court, counsel or parties 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 14th day of May, 2020, in Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Louisiana.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert P. Waddell', written over a horizontal line.

Chief Judge Robert P. Waddell  
On behalf of the Court