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PIERCE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT, STATE OF WASHINGTON

In Re

COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE
EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED
BY PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY IN
WASHINGTON STATE

GENERAL ORDER
NO. 2020-05

WHEREAS On February 29, 2020, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee declared a state of emergency due to the public health emergency posed by the spread of the coronavirus (COVID – 19).

WHEREAS on March 16, 2020 this Court issued emergency General Orders 2020-02 and 2020-03 based on the March 4, 2020 Order No. 25700-B-602 from Chief Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington State Supreme Court authorizing Presiding Judges to adopt, modify and suspend court rules and orders and to take further actions concerning court operations, as warranted to address the current public health emergency; and

WHEREAS on March 19, 2020 Chief Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington State Supreme Court adopted Corrected Order No. 25700-B-607, setting forth direction and authority to Presiding Judges of trial courts across the State to effectively

1 administer their courts in response to this state of emergency, including the authority to
2 adopt, modify, and suspend court rules and orders as warranted to address the
3 emergency conditions; and

4 WHEREAS on March 25, 2020 the Governor issued Proclamation 20-25 which
5 described the current state of the pandemic and the threat of community transmission
6 and directed that “all people in Washington State are immediately prohibited from
7 leaving their home or place of residence except to conduct or participate in (1) essential
8 activities, and/or (2) employment in providing essential business services”. The
9 proclamation mandates that essential businesses such as the Court are prohibited from
10 operating unless they establish and implement social distancing and sanitation
11 measures established by the United States Dept. of Labor’s guidance on Preparing
12 Workplaces for COVID-19 and the Washington State Dept. of Health Workplace and
13 Employer Resources & Recommendation; and

14 WHEREAS in response to the Governor’s order, the majority of court staff are
15 working remotely from home, with only minimal staff on site; and

16 WHEREAS Chief Justice Stephens’ General Order No. 25700-B-607 requires
17 that all matters conducted by the Court during this time period “must be heard by
18 telephone, video, or other means that do not require in-person attendance, unless
19 impossible. Where court matters must be heard in person, social distancing and other
20 public health measures must be strictly observed.” That Order further recognizes that
21 “[n]othing in this order limits the authority of courts to adopt measures to protect health
22 and safety that are more restrictive than this order, as circumstances warrant”;

