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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. 2020-02

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 4, 2020 Chief Justice Debra Stephens of the Washington State Supreme Court adopted Order No. 25700-B-602, granting emergency authority to the Presiding Judges of Washington courts to adopt, modify, and/or 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 16, 2020 the Governor imposed additional restrictions prohibiting gatherings of more than 50 people and shut down restaurants, bars, and entertainment and recreational facilities within the State of Washington due to the danger of continued spread of the virus and the increasing danger the virus presents to

1 the health care system in the region, as well as directing all public and private schools
2 within the State of Washington be closed from March 17 through April 24, 2020;

3 WHEREAS, as of the date of this Order, there have been 29 confirmed cases of
4 COVID-19 in Pierce County, over 750 cases in the State of Washington, and over 40
5 people in Washington State have died from the coronavirus.
6

7 Given the significant number of identified and projected cases of COVID-19 in the
8 area, the severity of risk posed to the public, and the above public health
9 recommendations from local public health authorities,
10

11 IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, that

12 1) Effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020, all civil and criminal jury trials scheduled
13 before this court will be rescheduled to a later date pending further order of the
14 Court.

15 2) Effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020 all in-person criminal proceedings, with the
16 exception of in-custody arraignments, in custody review hearings and in-custody
17 pre-trial conferences, will be continued and rescheduled to a later date pending
18 further order of the Court. All in-custody matters will be heard by video. CrRLJ
19 3.4 (d) is hereby modified for all in custody court proceedings to be conducted by
20 video.
21

22 3) To effectuate these continuances implemented by this general order CrRLJ 3.3,
23 the Time for Trial Rule for criminal matters, CrRLJ 4.1 time for arraignment and
24 the time for hearing on civil infractions under IRLJ 2.6 are hereby suspended.
25

26 The Court specifically finds the ends of justice served by the continuance
27 outweighs the best interest of the public and Defendant's right to a speedy trial
28

1 due to the unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances caused by the above
2 enunciated public health emergency.

3
4 4) Effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020 the following in person civil proceedings will
5 be continued and rescheduled to a later date:

6 i) All in-person traffic and other civil infraction hearings (both contested and
7 mitigation). The court will continue to accept written statements submitted
8 by mail (also known as hearings by mail). Until further order of Court, the
9 Court authorizes filing of a Motion for Reconsideration following a court's
10 determination on an initial written statement.

11
12 ii) Small claims mandatory mediation hearings and trials.

13 iii) Civil preliminary trial hearings such as civil pre-trial conferences and all
14 motion hearings.

15 iv) Name change hearings, unless exigency can be shown then the court
16 may set an in court hearing.

17
18 v) Impound of vehicle or vessel hearings. All time frames required by RCW
19 46.55.120 are suspended. Court will review all petitions filed in chambers
20 and may schedule in court hearings.

21 vi) Impound of animal hearings and other animal control type cases.

22
23 5) Effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020, all requests for temporary Anti-Harassment
24 Orders will be reviewed in chambers based on the written record. Hearings for
25 final Orders will be scheduled as needed at the discretion of the court. The court
26 reserves the right to continue any scheduled full order hearings. The parties
27 must be served with a copy of the continuance Order. The maximum length of a
28

1 temporary order pursuant to RCW 10.14.080(2) (Harassment) and RCW
2 7.92.120(5) Stalking shall be modified and authorize a maximum time for hearing
3 of up to thirty (30) days.
4

5 6) A defendant who contacts the Court by email or telephone seeking a hearing to
6 quash an outstanding bench warrant may have any warrants quashed ex-parte
7 by the Court in chambers so long as the defendant provides his or her current
8 mailing address and the case(s) does not involve an immediate threat to public
9 safety.
10

11 7) The Court reserves the right to maintain or schedule arraignments, pretrial
12 hearings, and/or review/revocation hearings between today's date and April 27,
13 2020 in cases involving threats to public safety, including but not limited to
14 domestic violence and driving while under the influence/physical control offenses.
15

16 9) Litigants and attorneys who appear in Pierce County District Court are expected
17 as much as possible to adhere to the six-foot social distancing from court staff as
18 well as other litigants.

19 10) Litigants and attorneys who feel sick should not enter Pierce County District
20 Court. Anyone deemed by the Court or by court staff to exhibit illness symptoms
21 may be ordered to leave.
22

23 It is anticipated that staff in the Clerk's Office will be available by telephone, mail
24 will be received, and live chat will remain available. The public is encouraged to
25 continue utilizing Court services while following all applicable public health guidelines.
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The Court will review this Administrative Order no later than April 27, 2020, and make a decision to modify, rescind or continue this Order.

Dated this 16th day of March, 2020.



JUDY RAE JASPRICA
PRESIDING JUDGE