

MESSAGE FROM ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE ROBERT A. GREENBERG REGARDING COURT CLOSURE

By virtue of the Administrative Order on Statewide Judiciary Restricted Operations Due to the COVID-19 Emergency dated March 16, 2020, the Circuit Court for Montgomery County is closed for all but essential business of an emergency nature effective immediately, until at least April 3, 2020. This means that virtually all motions, hearings, trials and other proceedings that were scheduled to take place in this courthouse will not be heard. The reader is invited to review a copy of that order, which is posted on this site.

The limited number of cases that this court is required to hear are eight in number: bail reviews; arraignments for detained defendants; juvenile detention hearings; emergency evaluation petitions; quarantine and isolation petitions; extradition cases; body attachments; and extreme risk protection order (ERPO) appeals.

The court also has discretionary authority to hear 12 other categories of cases deemed emergency in nature, but it is not required to do so. Since the idea of the court closure is to minimize human traffic in the courthouse and the number of people staffing the court, the court intends to exercise its emergency authority sparingly.

Every effort will be made to hold required hearings electronically, by phone or video conference. Bringing parties, witnesses or attorneys into the court building is not favored, but there may be cases requiring that to be done. In those cases the only persons permitted entry will be the attorneys, parties, and testifying witnesses, not friends or observers, absent express authorization by the Administrative Judge. Members of the media possessing credentials from a recognized media organization are permitted entry. Any requests by the media to see court files will be honored, but that review will occur in the designated media area only. Requests from non-media members to see court files will not be honored.

The Clerk's Office will remain accessible by phone only, and court filings can be mailed or placed in the secure dropbox located at the Maryland Avenue entrance. The Monroe Street and Terrace level entrances are temporarily closed.

Persons filing emergency motions should alert the clerk and provide a telephone number. The Administrative Judge will decide whether the motion will be heard or not, and notify the party or parties by phone. If not considered an emergency, the motion will be heard when the court resumes normal operations.

There may be a limited number of cases already scheduled in the next several weeks that fall into one of the eight mandatory categories set forth above. Please check the court dockets on this website, or the judge to whom the case has been assigned, to see whether your case will be heard on the scheduled date.

Search warrants presented during the day will be handled by the Administrative Judge, and after-hours warrants will be considered pursuant to the regular procedures by a duty judge of the District or Circuit Court. Protective orders are obtainable through the Commissioner. The Grand Jury will not be convening through April 3, but Drug and Mental Health Courts will meet by remote electronic participation, and not in the courthouse. Foreclosure sales, because they occur outside of the courthouse, may continue.

The court will be staffed by a very small number of people. Our normal group of about 430 employees will be limited to less than one-tenth of that number, exclusive of the sheriffs. Please be patient and understand that this is a new process for all, and there will undoubtedly be issues that arise. I will do my best to resolve them as speedily as possible. We can safely assume that there may be amendments to these policies as we go along, either by me or as a result of new guidance from the Court of Appeals. **PLEASE MAKE SURE TO CHECK BACK WITH THIS WEBSITE FREQUENTLY FOR CHANGES AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS.** Hopefully, we will see each other again very soon. I hope you and your families stay safe and healthy.

Robert A. Greenberg