

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND**

**SECOND GENERAL ORDER REGARDING
CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS DURING CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC**

This General Order is the second issued in response to the recent outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The first General Order was entered, in part, in response to guidance from the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) which had officially declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

In the period following the entry of this Court's March 13, 2020 General Order, the threat to public health and safety presented by the COVID-19 pandemic has become more widely understood. The CDC and other health authorities have advised people to take even greater precautions to reduce the possibility of exposure to the COVID-19 virus and to assist in slowing the spread of the disease. The CDC has recommended that employers attempt to minimize exposure between employees and the public and to consider the public health and safety when scheduling group or public events.

Because of the threat to public health and safety presented by public gatherings, the Court is unable to safely summons and convene an adequate cross-section of jurors and there is uncertainty as to the ability of parties, counsel, witnesses, court staff, and judges to attend criminal and civil trials, criminal sentencings, and criminal and civil hearings, accordingly in order to protect public health and safety, and to reduce the size of public gatherings and unnecessary travel, it is ordered:

1. The U.S. Courthouse building at One Exchange Terrace and the portion of the John O. Pastore Building (“Pastore Building”) occupied by the Court are closed to the public until further notice.
2. The presiding judge’s case manager will cancel all in-person civil matters, and instead, where possible, arrange hearings to be conducted telephonically.
3. All grand jury proceedings and all on-going criminal hearings will be continued unless the Defendant’s liberty interests are involved. The Court finds that the ends of justice served by ordering the continuance of all criminal jury trials outweighs each defendant’s right to and the public’s interest in speedy indictment or trial. Therefore, the time period of the continuances implemented by this General Order will be excluded under the Speedy Trial Act, 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A), subject to the entry of an order addressing the same by the presiding Judge in each case.
4. All permanent employees are expected to telework their regular hours and conduct any specific other duties at the Courthouse as required.
5. The Clerk’s Office phone will be forwarded to a daily duty member of the Clerk’s Office. The Court will post a sign at the entrances to the Courthouse directing people to electronic communications with the Court, or to call the Clerk’s Office number for further directions as necessary.
6. The Court will take necessary procedures for handling any emergency matters. Parties, attorneys, the public, or the press can call the Clerk’s Office at 401-752-7200 to arrange.

The Court will fully continue its mission of dispensing justice efficiently and effectively throughout this pandemic/public health emergency, and in particular: (1) activities necessary to support the exercise of the Article III judicial power; (2) activities to support rights guaranteed by the Constitution; and (3) emergency proceedings necessary for the safety of human life and the protection of property. Thanks to the strategic planning and foresight of the administrative team in our Court—the Clerk’s Office, our IT Department, Probation and Pretrial Office—and the incredible partnership and cooperation we have with the U.S. Marshals Service and the bar, our Court is capable of fully functioning and being operational while we contribute to the community’s response to this public health emergency.

This General Order takes effect on Friday, March 20, 2020. It replaces and supersedes this Court’s March 13, 2020 General Order. The Court will periodically review the Order and it remains in effect until it is found to be safe to remove or alter this Order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

By the Court:

March 19, 2020

/s/ John J. McConnell Jr., Chief Judge