

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND

GENERAL ORDER REGARDING PROTOCOLS FOR IN-PERSON HEARINGS AND JURY TRIALS

In order to administer hearings and jury trials that are scheduled to occur in the U.S. Courthouse in a fair, just, efficient and safe manner, it is ordered that the following protocols shall apply unless otherwise ordered by the court or the presiding judge:

Admission to Courthouse. Only counsel, the parties, and other persons needed to appear in person shall be admitted into the U.S. Courthouse and access shall be limited to entering and exiting the designated courtroom. Efforts should be made to limit all in-person proceedings to the minimum number of necessary participants. Counsel shall provide the presiding judge's case manager with the names and contact information of the individuals who plan to attend any in-person proceeding within 48 hours of any scheduled in-person proceeding.

Additional Public Access to Proceedings. Public access to an in-person proceeding will be provided by remote video conference. The Clerk shall provide information on access on the Court's website.

Entrance Protocols. All participants are subject to the provisions of this Court's General Order on Building Visitation and Access Restrictions. Counsel shall advise their clients and designated attendees that they may not attend an in-person proceeding if they provisions of the Court's [General Order on Building Visitation and Access Restrictions](#) are not satisfactory met, and shall advise the Court if any necessary participant (including themselves) cannot enter the U.S. Courthouse pursuant to that Order.

Safety Protocols. All participants must comply with Court and security personnel instructions and must wear a facial covering that covers the nose and mouth unless a participant is permitted to remove the facial covering by the presiding judge or an authorized Court staff member.

Presentation of Evidence. Questions to witnesses and argument will be made from counsel table. Witnesses will testify from the witness stand. Paper exhibits will not be used but must be electronically displayed once admitted by the Court. All proposed trial exhibits must be submitted in an electronic format to the Clerk's office in line with the presiding judge's trial notice and/or pretrial order. Attorneys must contact the Clerk's Office to determine the best method for submitting proposed exhibits electronically.

Cleaning Protocols. Tables, chairs, and equipment will be disinfected after each in-person proceeding before persons enter the courtroom for the next hearing. The Court will have adequate cleaning and disinfecting supplies available in the U.S. Courthouse and participants are encouraged to sanitize the space they are using upon completion of an in-person hearing.

The court will continue to conduct proceedings in eligible criminal and petty offense cases by video or telephone conference, as authorized by the CARES Act, and in civil cases as appropriate, to the maximum extent possible **and strongly encourages parties to continue to consent to and participate in video and teleconference hearings.**

IT IS SO ORDERED.

By the Court:

September 22, 2020

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