

Message sent on behalf of Chief Judge Maureen A. Tighe:

Dear Members of the Bar Advisory Board:

Here is an update on our reconstitution plans after the COVID-19 related shutdown. Please share this with your organization's members.

After reviewing the hundreds of answers we received from the bar survey, surveying all court staff and judges, and reviewing the latest local, state and federal guidance, we believe the best approach is to slowly return to in-person operations while closely monitoring data from each county and any COVID-19 cases in any courthouse.

To that end, you can expect the following:

1. The federal courthouses of the district will open to the public on June 22. Intake windows will be open in the Clerk's Office. Drop boxes will be used for many documents. Public computers and electronic kiosks will be disabled. The number of people allowed in will be limited, and no cash will be accepted. We encourage everyone who can to continue filing all pleadings remotely. There is still no need to provide paper judges' copies of pleadings unless they are over 25 pages.
2. Some of you have requested in-person hearings, and others would like to remain remote. Judges will start holding in-person hearings slowly after July 1, but most are waiting from one to six months to transition to more in-person hearings, all subject to a revision in plans if circumstances change. All will permit remote appearances through the end of the year for motions even if in-person appearances are allowed. For evidentiary hearings and trials, each case will be reviewed with counsel and the parties so that the particular circumstances of the case and the parties can be taken into consideration. Judges will each state on their webpage or on hearing notices what their procedure is for particular types of cases. Some will be telephonic only, some by video only and some in-person. If you have a specific concern in a case, please raise it with the judge assigned to the matter. If you have questions about a hearing that is not answered by the hearing notice or the website, please contact the Courtroom Deputy for the assigned judge. We will endeavor to communicate with the bar and the parties to a case.
3. If you should need to come to the courthouse, please wear a face covering unless you are medically exempted from the rule. Exceptions to the face covering rule when you are speaking in court will be decided by each judge. There may be temperature checks and screening questions at the entrance. A limited number of people will be allowed in the elevator, so allow time to get to court. Appropriate distances will be marked out in the courtroom and hallways, and occupancy numbers in the courtrooms will be reduced, so please observe all signs and avoid congregating in groups. Jury boxes may be used for seating to create more distance. The courtrooms will be cleaned every evening and all surfaces sanitized. There will be fresh disposable microphone covers available for each new speaker, so please remove your microphone cover when you are done with

your appearance. Wipes and hand sanitizer will be at each table. Please wipe down the surface around you when you are done if any court is scheduled after you.

4. All CDC and GSA protocols have been in effect and will continue for maintaining a safe courthouse. All public areas and restrooms will be sanitized every evening. Procedures are already in place to close sections of a courthouse immediately if a COVID-19 case is discovered and all affected areas will be deep cleaned. Please be assured that everyone takes your concerns very seriously.

5. GSA has provided the following information to the Court about HVAC systems: GSA strives to exceed the limit of outside air levels while balancing humidity, tenant comfort and safety. GSA is working with its operations and maintenance contractors to review the ventilation exchange rates, and increase outside air to the maximum extent possible within each building. GSA will inspect all air handling unit filters to ensure that they are operating within the limits prescribed by the equipment manufacturer. The Court will work with GSA and building landlords to monitor HVAC issues.

6. This is a fluid situation, and we will be progressing step by step to continue court operations while trying to keep everyone safe. Thank you in advance for your understanding and patience.

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