

November 23, 2020
PRESS RELEASE
For Immediate Release

FROM:

The Office of the Presiding Judge
Thomas M. O'Shaughnessy
Rita B. Garman Vermilion County Courthouse
7 N. Vermilion Street, Suite 413
Danville, IL 61832

RE: Temporary Suspension of Jury Trials at the Rita B. Garman Vermilion County Courthouse

Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in Vermilion County, Presiding Judge Thomas M. O'Shaughnessy announced a pause in jury trials through the end of January 2021. Judge O'Shaughnessy noted that the Rita B. Garman Vermilion County Courthouse has continued, and will continue to operate with respect to all other court proceedings with safety measures for the protection of all people who enter the Courthouse. But, due to the increased positivity rate, the judges decided that all cases scheduled for jury trial should be continued to a future date to be set by the assigned judge. Judge O'Shaughnessy, in announcing the suspension, said "the judges recognize the importance of taking necessary action to protect potential jurors, parties, members of the public, other judicial partners, and court employees from the spread of Covid-19. The Court has made extensive use of remote virtual hearings in 2020. It will be increasing its reliance on them to minimize the number of persons who must enter the Courthouse, which remain open for all matters except jury trials."

"This is a step taken out of caution," O'Shaughnessy said. "We have been very successful in minimizing the spread of the virus in the Courthouse and related facilities, but we know that the situation in the community is changing. We must all be mindful of the risk. We aren't operating as we did a year ago, but we won't be shut down to the degree we were in the Spring. The continued good work and cooperation of attorneys, courthouse staff, and the public have gotten us through this so far, and we are optimistic and prayerful that the end is in sight."

To minimize personal contacts with the Courthouse, the court continues the earlier practices of restricting access to the Courthouse to persons essential for court proceedings and operations; mandates the wearing of face coverings by all persons in the public spaces and courtrooms of the Courthouse; follows social distancing practices; and reduces high volume calls to no more than 20 cases scheduled each hour.

Judge O'Shaughnessy asks Courthouse patrons to keep in mind the following guidelines when scheduling and attending court hearings:

- Do not enter the Courthouse if you are feeling sick;
- Arrive no more than 10 minutes before the hearing and promptly leave after your hearing ends;
- Bring only yourself to the hearing;
- Wear a face covering;
- Maintain social distancing at all times;
- Courtroom seating has been marked; please follow the bailiffs' instructions;
- All non-e-filings must be done at the Clerk's lobby windows;
- Do not congregate inside or outside the courtroom, nor in the public spaces of the Courthouse;
- Limit negotiating on a case at the Courthouse -- While we know negotiations occur close to hearings, but you may not have that luxury for now. Judges may not allow extensive negotiations during hearings for everyone's safety;
- You are encouraged to bring your own hand sanitizer and pen in the event supplies run short; and
- Avoid touching handrails and other "high-touch" areas the best you can.

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