

FILED
COMMON PLEAS COURT

IN THE COMMON PLEAS COURT OF MEIGS COUNTY, OHIO
GENERAL DIVISION, DOMESTIC RELATIONS DIVISION

2020 MAR 18 PM 3:03

SAMANTHA MUGRAGE
CLERK OF COURTS
MEIGS COUNTY, OHIO

IN THE MATTER OF THE
COVID-19 PUBLIC
HEALTH EMERGENCY

GENERAL ORDER NO. 20-LR-001

The Judges of Meigs County, Ohio make the following findings:

On March 9, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued Executive Order 2020-01D declaring a state of emergency in response to the Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic, requiring urgent and aggressive action to control the spread of the virus.

On March 13, 2020 and March 17, 2020 County Public Office Holders met to discuss our respective County Offices' response to the public health crisis.

On March 18, 2020 the Ohio Attorney General, Dave Yost, issued opinion number 2020-002 that "...courts may suspend jury trials to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus, and they may do so consistent with state and federal speedy-trial obligations. Although tolling speedy-trial time by suspending jury trial activity is an extraordinary step, it is lawful – and responsible-to do so during a pandemic emergency...."

After consultation with the Meigs County Probate Juvenile Division and the Meigs County Court, all three judges agree that we need to protect the public, protect employees, and protect litigants while still allowing access to justice and administering justice.

Therefore, the following is hereby **ORDERED** as follows:

1. The Meigs County Common Pleas Court General Division, Domestic Relations Division, Probate Division and Juvenile Division, as well as the Meigs County Court Local Rules may be temporarily modified to allow these Courts the flexibility necessary to respond to this public health emergency.
2. The policies of our Courts may be temporarily adjusted to maintain essential Court operations and to reschedule less essential and non-emergency matters upon the Courts' own motions. This includes protecting the public and our employees by locking the Courts' office doors to the public and handling matters initially by phone, email and fax. Once matters are screened then a determination will be made, on a case-by-case; day-by-day basis of whether the request is a matter that must be handled immediately, making arrangements to conduct the Courts' business so as to minimize human-to-human contact, or if the matter can be handled without direct human-to-human contact or by setting the matter for a later date.

3. Our Courts authorize the use of videoconferencing equipment and alternative technologies for all actions and proceedings during this public health emergency.
4. Our Courts have determined that the COVID-19 public health emergency is a good cause for continuance and such continuances shall be liberally granted during this public health emergency.
5. Petit jurors summoned for jury duty from March 18, 2020 until April 30, 2020 are not required to report for jury service. Unless otherwise notified, Grand Jurors still appear on April 14, 2020, as scheduled.
6. Our Courts hereby permit filing of court documents via ordinary mail, e-mail or fax. Other than new petitions for domestic violence protection orders or for stalking protection orders and emergency custody matters, in-person filings options will be with specific pre-arranged and pre-screened cases.
7. Payment for filing fees shall still be required in order for documents to be filed. Payments can be made electronically (which includes associated fees beyond the control of the Clerk of Courts) by calling the Court's Clerk at 740-992-5290.
8. The Courts shall have authority, within constitutional limits, to do or direct to be done all things necessary to ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice while also being mindful of and taking steps to assure public safety and health during the duration of the declared state of emergency.
9. All this we do in an attempt to reduce the risk of loss of life during this public health crisis.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



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