

Subject: Important Court Changes - COVID Updates

Date: Friday, November 20, 2020 at 1:32:38 PM Central Standard Time

From: WCBA

To: tbatoday

Wash Co. State Sessions Court Calendar Changes

Dear fellow members of the Washington County Bar,

Brenda Downes, Circuit Court Clerk for Washington County, has asked me to distribute the [attached](#) schedule. In order to protect the safety of our clerks, deputies, attorneys, and all who work in our courthouse, it has become necessary to reset State Sessions Court matters that are currently set on dates covered by the schedule to the coordinating date on the right side. This does not apply to incarcerated defendants, they will be brought from the jail on their court dates. There may be very rare exceptions to this policy, but they must be unanimously agreed to by all parties and approved by the Judge.

Again, these measures are an effort to keep everyone safe and give our hardworking clerks some flexibility in their staffing to be able to keep our courts running.

Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Yours,

Stephanie A. Sherwood

TSC ISSUES NEW ORDER RELATED TO COURT OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19

November 17, 2020

In response to the increased number of COVID-19 cases in the state, the Tennessee Supreme Court issued an Order today designed to protect all of the

participants in the judicial system and the public at large while keeping the courts open and accessible to carry out essential constitutional functions and time-sensitive proceedings. This is the Court's sixth order related to the pandemic since it declared a state of emergency for the judicial branch on March 13, 2020.

[Today's Order](#) suspends jury trials from November 23, 2020 through January 31, 2021, unless an exemption is granted by the Chief Justice. Jury trials were previously suspended from March 13 – July 3, 2020. In addition, the Order directs judicial districts to revisit and strictly adhere to their previously approved reopening plans; reiterates that the Court's July 9 Order mandating face coverings for all persons who enter the courthouse for court-related business is still in full effect; encourages video conferencing whenever possible; reminds judges and attorneys that they have an ethical obligation to comply with Court Orders and the reopening plans drafted by the judicial districts; and prohibits anyone with COVID-19 from participating in an in-person proceeding. In addition, the Order directs judges to schedule and conduct in-person hearings in a manner that minimizes wait times in courthouse hallways, which often have limited space for social distancing.



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