

**FOURTH (4<sup>TH</sup>) JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
COVID -19**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER**

**STATE OF ALABAMA  
BIBB, DALLAS, HALE  
PERRY AND WILCOX COUNTIES**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER FOR JUDICIAL BUILDINGS COURTROOM  
PROCEDURES AND SECURITY BEGINNING MAY 18, 2020**

WHEREAS, THE Alabama Supreme Court on April 30, 2020 entered Administrative Order No. 6: Extending Orders and Deadlines Concerning the Suspension of In-Person Proceedings through May 15, 2020, wherein all Supreme Court administrative orders relating to the COVID-19 pandemic were extended through May 15, 2020;

WHEREAS, suspension of in-person proceedings are being lifted beginning May 18, 2020; therefore, beginning May 18, 2020, certain protocols will be in effect in the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit (hereinafter "Fourth Circuit") to reduce the risk of infection while conducting business, including in-person hearings within the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit; and

**WHEREAS, all judges, lawyers and parties are STRONGLY URGED to continue using videoconferencing through the secure AlaCourt Virtual Hearing ("ZOOM") Application whenever same can be accomplished, in lieu of in-person hearings,**

It is therefore ORDERED that the following procedures shall be implemented in the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit beginning May 18, 2020, for the safety and well-being of our citizens who have business in the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit:

1. All in person proceedings in all courts of the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit, including but not limited to circuit, district, probate, domestic relations, juvenile, child support, traffic, small claims and municipal shall remain SUSPENDED until JUNE 1, 2020, with the exceptions outlined in the Orders issued by the Supreme Court of Alabama.
2. Judges and Courts, shall use teleconferencing and/or Alacourt's Zoom to conduct business during this period.
3. All jury trials are suspended until SEPTEMBER 14, 2020 as Ordered by the Supreme Court of Alabama.

EFFECTIVE JUNE 1, 2020, Judges and Courts are allowed to commence in-person hearings and conduct regular business with the following procedures being implemented due to the increasing numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases in our circuit, the deaths related thereto, and the need for further testing:

- a. Six feet of social distancing shall be observed by all members of the public, attorneys and court personnel at all times and at all locations in the courthouses and courtrooms.

- b. All persons entering the courthouses and courtrooms are required to wear appropriate face coverings. Judges may grant permission for removal of face coverings for anyone in his or her courtroom in each Judge's sole discretion. Judges may also require single-use gloves for all in court proceedings.
- c. Court dockets should be limited to twenty-five (25) persons, per docket, per setting.
- d. Dockets must be staggered in times and days to accommodate the twenty-five (25) persons docket requirement.
- e. All persons entering the courthouses and courtroom shall comply with the requirements of the County Commissions, City Councils and local entities for entering these facilities as it relates to temperature checks, entering and exiting certain doors, etc.
- f. In-person proceedings shall be limited to attorneys, parties, witnesses and other necessary parties as determined by the trial judge.
- g. Each Judge shall determine and post outside of his or her courtroom the maximum occupancy level for their courtrooms and adjacent meeting areas.
- h. Judges are encouraged to schedule special settings over general docket calls.
- i. The use of electronic document exchange for exhibits is encouraged consistent with this Court's Virtual Proceeding Administrative Order No. AO-2020-031
- j. Continued use of teleconferencing and Alacourt's Zoom are encouraged for circuit, district, and juvenile courts.
- k. Judges are encouraged to provide public access to open court hearings by entering Orders containing Alacourt Zoom log-in information or other available technology.

IN CONCLUSION:

The 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit will comply with the requirements as outlined above and with the Operation Plans of each County in a cooperative effort and spirit to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Further, this Order may be extended and/or a more detailed Operation Plan implemented based upon guidance from the Supreme Court of Alabama, local public health officials, and recommendations from the COVID-19 Committees of the 4<sup>th</sup> Circuit.

**DONE and ORDERED this the 18<sup>th</sup> DAY OF MAY, 2020.**

/s/Marvin W. Wiggins  
Marvin W. Wiggins, Presiding Circuit Judge