STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

SUPREME COURT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

R E V I S E D – EFFECTIVE JULY 28, 2020

SIXTH RENEWED AND AMENDED EMERGENCY ORDER GOVERNING NEW HAMPSHIRE SUPREME COURT PROCEEDINGS AND RESTRICTING ACCESS TO THE SUPREME COURT BUILDING

Pursuant to its constitutional and statutory authority and powers of general superintendence over the New Hampshire court system, and conditioned upon Governor Sununu renewing his State of Emergency Declaration under RSA 4:45, the New Hampshire Supreme Court makes the following orders governing **New Hampshire Supreme Court** cases and proceedings in light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

1. As of July 28, 2020, and through August 17, 2020 and/or the last day of a Declared State of Emergency, the Supreme Court will remain open on a restricted basis, consistent with the Judicial Branch's obligation to mitigate the risks associated with COVID-19. Filings may be submitted through the court's electronic filing (e-filing) system, through the mail, or via the drop box in front of the Supreme Court building. In addition, filings that seek emergency relief or require urgent attention may be submitted in person at the clerk's office. The Supreme Court building remains open for those purposes and for any in-person court proceedings permitted by paragraph 6 below. The Supreme Court building will not otherwise be open to the general public. As a result, citizens will not have in-person access to the New Hampshire Law Library for purposes of conducting research or to the clerk's office for purposes of using computer kiosks or reviewing case files or pleadings. Citizens can request assistance regarding a Supreme Court case by calling (603) 271-2646 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. During the same hours, Law Library staff are available by calling (603) 271-3777 or e-mailing lawlibrary@courts.state.nh.us. Information concerning curbside pickup of books from the Law Library is available here: https://www.courts.state.nh.us/lawlibrary/index.htm.

2. The July 2, 2020 Fifth Renewed and Amended Emergency Order Governing New Hampshire Supreme Court Proceedings and Restricting Access to the Supreme Court Building remains in effect until 8:00 a.m. on July 28, 2020.

3. The following paragraphs of this Sixth Renewed and Amended Emergency Order will go into effect at 8:00 a.m. on July 28, 2020, and will

remain in effect through August 17, 2020 and/or the last day of a Declared State of Emergency, unless this order is further renewed or explicitly revoked beforehand.

4. The Supreme Court will accept electronic signatures on any pleading and will allow a litigant's signature to be electronically or conventionally made by the litigant's attorney, provided that the attorney includes a statement that the attorney has communicated with the litigant, the attorney has received the litigant's authorization to sign the pleading on the litigant's behalf, and the litigant has affirmed the information in the pleading.

5. Subject to the exceptions in paragraph 6 below, all in-person proceedings in the Supreme Court will remain suspended from July 28, 2020, through August 17, 2020.

6. Exceptions to suspension of in-person court proceedings include, but are not limited to:

- Proceedings necessary to protect constitutional rights of criminal defendants.
- Proceedings necessary to protect the public on an interim or emergency basis from a substantial threat of serious harm posed by the conduct of an attorney or judge.
- Proceedings related to petitions for temporary emergency relief.
- Proceedings directly related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Other exceptions as approved by the Supreme Court or a single justice.

7. To achieve social distancing and to limit in-person contact, attendance at any in-court emergency proceedings held by the Supreme Court during the effective period of this order shall be limited to attorneys, parties, security officers, and other necessary persons, as determined by the Supreme Court or a single justice. However, to comply with the ongoing recommendations to mitigate the risks of COVID-19, the Supreme Court may conduct the above-referenced cases telephonically or by video conferencing, to the extent possible.

8. Any Supreme Court Rule that impedes the ability of the court or the clerk to utilize available technologies that would limit in-person contact or obviate travel to the Supreme Court building is suspended for the duration of this order. In particular, the provisions of Rule 4(a) of the Supplemental Rules of the Supreme Court of New Hampshire for Electronic Filing are suspended to the extent that they:

- Restrict the ability of attorneys, self-represented parties, and nonlawyer representatives in cases commenced in the Supreme Court prior to August 6, 2018, to submit documents through the e-filing system.
- Restrict the ability of self-represented parties and nonlawyer representatives in cases commenced in the Supreme Court on or after August 6, 2018, but prior to January 1, 2020, to submit documents through the e-filing system.
- Require self-represented parties and nonlawyer representatives in cases commenced in the Supreme Court on or after January 1, 2020, to submit documents through the e-filing system.

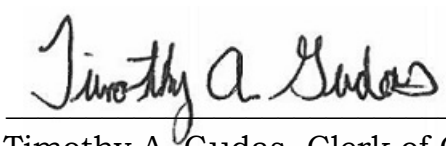
9. Accordingly, in any Supreme Court case, a filing may be submitted by an attorney, a self-represented party, or a nonlawyer representative in any of the following ways during the effective period of this order: (a) electronically through the court's e-filing system; (b) in paper, by mailing the filing to the clerk's office; or (c) in paper, by placing the filing in the drop box that is located in front of the Supreme Court building. The timing, including timeliness, of a filing shall be determined in accordance with applicable Rules. See Rule 9(d) of the Supplemental Rules of the Supreme Court of New Hampshire for Electronic Filing; Supreme Court Rule 26(1).

10. This order encourages the use of telephone, video conferencing, and teleconferencing for court proceedings, along with similar methods that do not involve in-person contact. This order does not affect the Supreme Court's consideration of matters that can be resolved without in-person proceedings.

11. Given the expanded methods of filing allowed by this order, and the interests of both the Supreme Court and the parties in advancing cases that do not require in-person proceedings, Supreme Court filing deadlines are not extended, tolled or suspended by this order, but may be extended upon motion in accordance with Supreme Court Rules.

12. This order is intended to be interpreted broadly for protection of the public from risks associated with COVID-19. Accordingly, the Supreme Court will liberally consider any reasonable requests for extensions arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Issued: July 23, 2020

ATTEST: 

Timothy A. Gudas, Clerk of Court
Supreme Court of New Hampshire