NEWS RELEASE

Judicial Branch, State of New Hampshire

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New Hampshire Superior Court Limits Livestream of Jury Trials

Cases involving victims' testimony will not be livestreamed

CONCORD, NH – The New Hampshire Superior Court announced today that it will not automatically livestream cases involving the testimony of victims. On July 14, 2020, the New Hampshire Supreme Court authorized the resumption of jury trials pursuant to a carefully crafted plan to address the health and safety concerns created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The first jury trial under this trial plan occurred in August 2020. Since then the court has continued to modify and refine the process. To that end, court staff has worked with prosecutors, members of the NH Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, and the defense bar, to revise the jury plan template to prevent the testimony of victims from being broadcast by the court over the Internet without their consent. In those cases, the court will reserve a number of spaces in the courtroom for public access.

If a victim does not object to livestreaming, the court will permit individuals who have requested access to watch the proceedings by video. Courts may continue to livestream other court proceedings that do not involve victim testimony when the trial judge deems it appropriate.
Noted Chief Justice of the Superior Court Tina Nadeau, "The Judicial Branch has worked during these unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic to develop a plan that allows us to resume criminal jury trials in a safe manner while making sure we provide constitutionally sufficient public access to our courts. We continue to learn and revise the jury trial plan as we gain experience and adapt to constant challenges this pandemic presents.

"In this regard, we appreciate the concerns raised by victims' rights advocates. We have determined this revised policy would better ensure an appropriate balance between the defendant's and public's right to observe jury trials during the COVID-19 pandemic and victims' rights to prevent their identity from being spread across the Internet."

Access to justice in the court system is central to the courts' mission, and this move assures that victims of crime are protected as much as possible during public hearings, while also respecting the rights of defendants in the courtroom.

To learn more about jury trials in New Hampshire, see https://www.courts.state.nh.us/

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