STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

SUPREME COURT OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

R E V I S E D – EFFECTIVE FEBRUARY 23, 2021

SIXTEENTH 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 February 23, 2021, and through March 15, 2021 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, for scheduled in-person court proceedings, and for scheduled appointments with the New Hampshire Law Library. The Supreme Court building will not otherwise be open to the general public. As a result, citizens will not have drop-in 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 Law Library appointments and curbside pickup of books is available here: https://www.courts.state.nh.us/lawlibrary/index.htm. Appointments must also be made through the Law Library to review a Supreme Court file; requests should be accompanied by a completed Request To Review File form (https://www.courts.state.nh.us/forms/nhjb-2884-sup.pdf).

2. The January 28, 2021 Fifteenth 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 February 23, 2021.

3. The following paragraphs of this Sixteenth Renewed and Amended Emergency Order will go into effect at 8:00 a.m. on February 23, 2021, and will remain in effect through March 15, 2021 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. The Supreme Court held in-person oral arguments on dates between September 9 and November 19, 2020, and heard arguments in additional cases through February 18, 2021, via Webex video conferencing.

6. In preparation for upcoming proceedings, the Supreme Court has issued oral argument lists for February 24, and March 18, 2021. The oral argument lists are available here: https://www.courts.state.nh.us/supreme/orals/index.htm. The oral arguments on those dates are scheduled to take place via Webex video conferencing.

7. 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.

8. 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).

9. This order permits 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.

10. Given the expanded methods of filing allowed by this order, and the interests of both the Supreme Court and the parties in advancing cases during the pandemic, 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.

11. 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, as well as any reasonable requests for use of Webex video conferencing in lieu of a scheduled in-person court proceeding.

Issued: February 18, 2021

ATTEST: Timothy A. Gudas

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