SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

IN RE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	**Delivered:** April 23, 2020

PER CURIAM

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court of Arkansas delivered per curiam orders on March 17, March 20, and April 3, 2020, implementing emergency precautions to help protect the public from unnecessary risks. *See In re Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020 Ark. 116 (per curiam); *In re Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020 Ark. 125 (per curiam); *In re Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020 Ark. 132 (per curiam). On April 16, President Donald Trump released Guidelines for Opening Up America Again to help guide state and local officials when reopening their locations. Today, we announce additional measures to combat the spread of the disease to the public, including the employees of the Arkansas judiciary.

The courts of the State of Arkansas shall remain open. The previous suspension of all in-person proceedings in all appellate, circuit, and district courts shall be extended through May 15, 2020, and may be extended by this court as circumstances warrant. All previously announced suspensions and extensions from the court's earlier responses to the COVID-19 pandemic remain in effect until further notice.

The excepted proceedings listed in the March 17 per curiam, *In re Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020 Ark. 116 ("emergency proceedings"), should continue to be held

but only occur in-person if holding the proceeding remotely is not possible or feasible. If emergency proceedings must be held in-person, the court should ensure that (1) no more than 10 persons are gathered in the courtroom or in areas around the courtroom; (2) participants wear face coverings where possible; and (3) participants in the courtroom are separated consistent with social-distancing guidelines and other precautions. Non-emergency proceedings should not be held in-person. With the ready availability of video conferencing and teleconferencing technologies, most proceedings can be conducted remotely. There are no limitations on those remote proceedings so long as reasonable notice and access is provided to the participants and the public. Judges shall remain mindful that certain portions of hearings may be inappropriate for livestreaming to the public just as they would be inappropriate for public access in a physical courtroom.

This Order is to be interpreted broadly for protection of the public from the risks associated with COVID-19. This Order applies statewide to all courts and court clerks' offices except administrative courts of the executive branch, federal courts, and federal court clerks' offices in Arkansas.

It is so ORDERED.

FOR THE COURT:

John Dan Kemp, Chief Justice