State of New York
Unified Court System

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Lawrence K. Marks
Chief Administrative Judge

MEMORANDUM

March 13, 2020

To: All Judicial and Non-Judicial Personnel of the Unified Court System

From: Lawrence K. Marks LM

Re: Coronavirus – Procedures to Reduce Courthouse Traffic

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As part of our ongoing efforts to reduce courthouse traffic to combat spread of the coronavirus and protect the health and safety of our workforce, and consistent with recent action by Governor Cuomo to limit large public gatherings through the State, the Chief Judge and I are announcing the following measures relating to court proceedings:

- Jury and Jury Trial Matters: Effective this Monday, March 16, civil jury trials in which opening statements have not commenced shall be postponed until further notice; civil jury trials already commenced shall continue to conclusion. Criminal jury trials shall continue where jeopardy has attached; no new criminal jury trials shall be commenced. The jury selection process in civil and criminal trial matters shall be suspended until further notice. Existing grand juries will continue, upon consultation of the appropriate district attorney and empaneling judge. No new grand juries shall be empaneled absent exceptional circumstances.[1]

High Traffic Civil Parts

- Civil Trial Assignment Parts: Effective March 16, operation of civil TAP parts shall be suspended until further notice.

- Preliminary Conference Parts: Effective March 16, centralized preliminary conference parts shall be managed with a goal of minimizing courthouse appearances, maximizing adjournments and stipulations on consent, and directing remote appearances through Skype or telephone.

[1] We anticipate the imminent issuance of an appropriate gubernatorial Executive Order authorizing these actions addressing criminal jury matters.

- Compliance Conference Parts: Effective March 16, unless otherwise directed by the court, all compliance conferences in centralized compliance parts shall be postponed until further notice. Where an appearance is unavoidable, it shall be conducted by Skype or telephone whenever possible.

Civil Individual Assignment Parts

- Motion practice: Effective March 16, unless otherwise directed by the court in exceptional circumstances, all motions in civil matters shall be taken on submission. When permitted, argument should be conducted by Skype or other remote means whenever possible.

- Preliminary and Compliance Conference Calendars: Effective March 16, individual assignment preliminary conference and compliance conference calendars shall be managed with a goal of minimizing courthouse appearances, maximizing adjournments and stipulations on consent, and directing remote appearances through Skype or telephone.

- NYC Housing Court Matters: Effective immediately, we have imposed a one-week moratorium on evictions in New York City, subject to further extension upon review. Simultaneously, we are directing that, until further notice, the New York City Housing Court decline to issue new eviction warrants when a party has not appeared in court.

Travel and Meetings

In addition to these limitations in court operations, the following conditions have been placed on travel and meetings by all judicial and non-judicial personnel of the Unified Court System, also effective March 16:

- All non-essential UCS travel is prohibited until further order.

- All UCS personnel meetings should be conducted, to the fullest extent possible, in a manner that maximizes use of Skype or other videoconferencing, or teleconferencing, and minimizes the need to travel on public transportation.

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These initiatives are part of our continuing efforts to assure the operation of the courts in the safest possible manner for the public and our employees in this time of medical emergency. Thank you for your continuing cooperation and support in these efforts.