EMERGENCY ALERTS

Coronavirus Update

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PRESS RELEASE

Courts Extend Start Date for Jury Trials

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

11/06/2020

Massachusetts Court System

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court

Executive Office of the Trial Court

Office of Jury Commissioner

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BOSTON, MA — The Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) and the Trial Court announce that the gradual resumption of jury trials will now commence the week of November 30, 2020. However, Phase 1 of the plan previously approved by the SJC order of September 17, 2020, has been scaled back due to the current situation in the Commonwealth with respect to COVID-19.

As recommended by the Jury Management Advisory Committee (JMAC) in its **report on the resumption of jury trials** (/doc/jury-management-advisory-committee-jmac-report-and-recommendations-to-the-justices-of-the/download), Phase 1 will last for two months. The number of jury trials and locations, however, will be reduced. Beginning the week of November 30, trials to juries of six will commence in courthouses that have been identified by the Trial Court as meeting the environmental and engineering controls that were recommended by the JMAC. Only one trial each week will be conducted in each courthouse. Comprehensive protocols that address the health and safety of jurors and other trial participants will be in place at all stages of the trials, from receipt of a summons through conclusion of the trial and exit from the courthouse. These trials will help guide court leaders as they consider moving to Phase 2 of the plan for the gradual resumption of jury trials.

The limited resumption of jury trials is intended to balance the safety of everyone who enters a courthouse with the fundamental constitutional right to a trial by jury. Careful compliance with the protective protocols and safety measures put in place by the Trial Court will allow the court to better protect both of those interests.

The Trial Court and the Office of Jury Commissioner have produced an informative video, ***What to Expect When You Are Summoned to Jury Duty*** (/info-details/court-system-covid-19-video-resources#what-to-expect-when-you-are-summoned-to-jury-duty-), which details the extensive steps being taken to provide for the safety of jurors, court staff, and the public. Summoned jurors also are reminded to contact the Office of Jury Commissioner in advance of their date of service if they or a household member have an identified vulnerability to COVID-19, or other circumstances related to COVID-19.

As always, all plans and expectations regarding the resumption of jury trials may be adjusted as the court continues to monitor the COVID-19 situation in the Commonwealth.

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Massachusetts Court System (/orgs/massachusetts-court-system)

The Massachusetts court system consists of the Supreme Judicial Court, the Appeals Court, the Executive Office of the Trial Court, the 7 Trial Court departments, the Massachusetts Probation Service, and the Office of Jury Commissioner.

More (/orgs/massachusetts-court-system)

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (/orgs/massachusetts-supreme-judicial-court)

The Supreme Judicial Court is the Commonwealth's highest appellate court.

More (/orgs/massachusetts-supreme-judicial-court)

Executive Office of the Trial Court (/orgs/executive-office-of-the-trial-court)

The Executive Office of the Trial Court facilitates communication and enables joint leadership of the Trial Court by the Chief Justice of the Trial Court and the Court Administrator.

More (/orgs/executive-office-of-the-trial-court)

Office of Jury Commissioner (/orgs/office-of-jury-commissioner)

The OJC provides randomly selected pools of jurors, representative of the communities from which they are drawn, to each of the state's Trial Jury and Grand Jury courts.

More (/orgs/office-of-jury-commissioner)