Administrative Office of the Courts

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New Mexico courts to remain open but steps implemented to minimize public health risks from coronavirus

SANTA FE – The state Supreme Court today announced measures by courts to minimize public health risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) for those who visit or work in courthouses.

Chief Justice Judith K. Nakamura said state courts – district, magistrate, metropolitan and appellate courts – will remain open for business to ensure courts fulfill their constitutional and statutory duties.

"The Judiciary's responsibility to ensure constitutional protections are available to those who need them has been especially important during difficult times in our history. We are working closely with state and local governments and taking steps to ensure that courthouses are safe for jurors, litigants, lawyers, judicial employees, judges and all members of the public." Chief Justice Nakamura said.

Among the measures directed by the Supreme Court:

- Courts will limit the number of people summoned to jury duty. Typically, courts will limit jury pools to no more than 25 people. If additional jurors are needed, courts will keep them in separate rooms even if it requires lawyers to separately question jury pools.

- Jurors who have traveled to areas with a high concentration of confirmed coronavirus cases should contact their court before reporting for jury duty. Jurors who are ill will be immediately released and sent home.

- Judges will postpone civil jury trials that have not yet started unless there are exceptional circumstances.

- Judges will conduct all proceedings in a way that minimizes contact among people in the courtroom including the use of telephone and technology.

- Criminal proceedings will continue.

- Out-of-state work travel is suspended for judicial employees and judges.

- The Judiciary has limited the number of inmates that may be transported from jails to courthouses for hearings.

- Courts are working with those responsible for cleaning and maintaining courthouses to ensure compliance with enhanced cleaning requirements.

The Chief Justice strongly encourages people who need to visit courthouses to follow the recommendations of health officials to protect themselves and others from the spread of coronavirus. Those include washing hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and maintaining a safe social distance from others.

“Our courts will continue to carefully monitor developments related to the coronavirus and will take additional steps as necessary to minimize public health risks of New Mexicans who require justice services,” said Chief Justice Nakamura.

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