SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS

CHAMBERS OF
CHIEF JUSTICE ANNE M. BURKE

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MEMORANDUM

To: Chairman of the Executive Committee, 1st District Appellate Court
Presiding Justices, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th District Appellate Courts
Chief Judges of the Circuit Courts

From: Chief Justice and Justices of the Supreme Court of Illinois

cc: Marcia Meis, Director, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts

Date: March 11, 2020

Re: Impact of COVID-19 on Judicial Branch Operations; Education Conference 2020

The Supreme Court of Illinois, in coordination with the Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts, is giving careful consideration to the many concerns around the impact of COVID-19 on Judicial Branch operations, including the availability of court services to court patrons and internal meetings and gatherings planned on behalf of, or under the auspices of, the Supreme Court or its Administrative Office.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) is recommending that high risk individuals avoid large gatherings and non-essential travel. Expert guidance from the CDC (www.cdc.gov) and the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) (www.dph.illinois.gov), as well as sources such as Harvard Health (https://www.health.harvard.edu/), promote "social distancing" as a way to curtail community spread of COVID-19. As such, please be advised that the Supreme Court's largest event, Education Conference 2020 and all Conference-related events scheduled during the week of March 30 – April 3, 2020 in Lombard, are hereby cancelled. The Judicial College and the Committee on Judicial Education will be exploring suitable alternatives. Please expect an email from the Administrative Office detailing this cancellation notice and the future of Education Conference meetings and events.

Additionally, we ask that non-essential in-person meetings, trainings, or other events scheduled under the auspices of the Supreme Court or the Administrative Office be postponed until further advisories to the contrary are communicated. Where appropriate, please take advantage of available technology and feel free to hold meetings, trainings or events via teleconference, videoconference, or other electronic means. Administrative Office staff serving as advisors and

liaisons to Supreme Court Committees will coordinate cancellations, postponements, and re-scheduling of these events, as needed.

The Administrative Office is actively monitoring COVID-19 information and announcements and assessing the resultant impacts on the Judicial Branch. The Supreme Court will continue to make decisions as appropriate, with guidance from public health statements issued by the CDC, the IDPH, the Governor's Office, and other relevant credible sources.

Given the rapidly changing circumstances and various sources of information, the Administrative Director will communicate updates to the Court website, as often as necessary, relative to COVID-19. As the situation evolves, we ask the Chief Circuit Court Judges, Chairman of the Executive Committee and Presiding Justices of the Illinois Appellate Court, and other Judicial Branch Managers to keep the Administrative Director informed of COVID-19 related developments at the local level, especially circumstances impacting court operations, service to court patrons, and judicial branch employees.

Please employ a balanced and objective approach that considers both the uninterrupted administration of justice and the health and well-being of the judicial branch and its court patrons. If you have not done so already, please take the time to review pandemic and emergency courthouse operations manuals and procedures in order to be prepared for situations to quickly evolve. The attached Conference of Chief Circuit Judges Pandemic Benchbook, updated in 2017, is an excellent resource.

Similar to the process regularly used to notify of emergency courthouse closings, the Administrative Director should be notified of any activation of local circuit or appellate emergency plans. Public statements or press releases regarding same should be coordinated with the Director of Supreme Court Communications, Chris Bonjean, at cbonjean@illinoiscourts.gov or 312-793-2323.

Finally, the Administrative Office will be providing Judicial Branch Managers with guidance on the management of requests from employees, including the possibility of remote work in the coming days. We want to encourage all Judicial Branch Managers to approach employee needs with great flexibility.

The Supreme Court and its Administrative Office will continue to monitor the CDC, the IDPH, and NCSC websites for guidance, and local jurisdictions are encouraged to do the same.