NEWS RELEASE

Judicial Branch, State of New Hampshire

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New Hampshire Superior Court Cancels Jury Trials for the Month of January in Four Counties Due to Rising COVID Concerns and Ventilation Constraints

Trials in other counties and smaller hearings will continue as scheduled until further notice

CONCORD, NH — In light of rapidly rising COVID-19 infection rates and limited air circulation in four county courthouses, Chief Justice of the Superior Court Tina Nadeau has made the decision to cancel jury trials in Sullivan, Strafford, Hillsborough Southern District, and Belknap counties for the month of January 2021.

“In our monthly meeting with Judicial Branch expert, Dr. Erin Bromage, he reported that the months of December and January will be particularly challenging in terms of increased COVID-19 infection rates and cases. As a result and in light of suboptimal air filtration and ventilation systems in some counties, the Court is canceling jury trials and grand jury proceedings in Sullivan, Strafford, Hillsborough Southern District and Belknap counties for the month of January 2021,” noted Chief Justice Nadeau. “However, ventilation in the four affected county courthouses is still adequate to safely conduct smaller, necessary in-person hearings and the courthouses will remain open for current limited operations. In addition, we continue to conduct video and telephonic hearings throughout the day in all court locations.”

Two additional cases scheduled in Belknap County in December have also been cancelled, *State v. Otto Keller* and *State v. Adam Littizao.*

“Cancelling these cases is a difficult decision,” said Nadeau, “and it was made to ensure the continued health and safety of jurors, court staff, and parties to these cases.”

Nadeau noted, however, that the decision to cancel trials in these counties would not affect the trial schedules and grand jury proceedings in other counties with lower infection rates and better ventilated courthouses. Trials scheduled to take place in Rockingham County, Hillsborough County Northern District, Cheshire, and Merrimack County will continue as scheduled until further notice. Also jury trials are still on track to proceed in Coos, Grafton and Carroll counties. Trials in the four counties affected will likely resume when infection rates subside.

“While we are confident in proceeding in these other counties,” Nadeau said, “we will continue to evaluate the safety of conducting jury trials and grand jury proceedings on a week-to-week basis.”

For more information on jury trials in New Hampshire, see the NHJB website.

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