Supreme Court of Arkansas

JOHN DAN KEMP
CHIEF JUSTICE

JUSTICE BUILDING
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LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201

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Re: COVID-19 Update Issued March 13, 2020

Dear Judges:

The Supreme Court of Arkansas continues to monitor the national, state, and local responses to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) and will follow the guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). At this time, there are no changes to normal court operations within the State of Arkansas. Any future changes or updates will be posted on the Arkansas Judiciary website. Please note that any change in court operations may vary between the circuits and will depend on the guidance provided by local public-health agencies.

If a court deems that nonessential, in-person proceedings pose an unnecessary or unreasonable risk to participants, court staff, or the public, the court should avoid that risk, whenever possible, by continuing the proceeding or by conducting a telephone conference or videoconference by remote appearance.

Courts should encourage people with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms to contact the court before appearing. Courts should also encourage attorneys who know that clients, witnesses, or others have such a condition to notify the court. The court should make reasonable accommodations and reschedule appearances and hearings as needed.

Courts should attempt to implement telephone conferences or videoconferencing for appearances or hearings. Please be aware that our courts are open to the public under the Arkansas Constitution and that the public shall have access to court proceedings. If you hold a telephone conference or videoconference hearing, you should consider a method by which the public may have access.

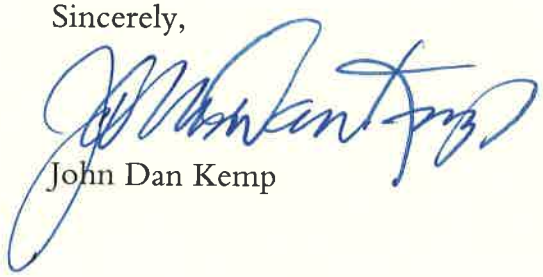
Request for Notice

Should your court choose to suspend operations for a period of time, please notify AOC by email at courtclosures@arcourts.gov.

In an effort to practice social distancing for hearings conducted in circuit courts, I am forwarding information regarding the use of Zoom videoconferencing formulated by Tim Holthoff, Court Information Systems Division Director. I am also forwarding the Judges' Bench Guide for Using Videoconferencing Technology in Court Proceedings. If Zoom or some other videoconferencing technology is used by your court, the purchase could be made by using court-automation funds.

Our goal is to continue court proceedings in a safe manner using appropriate protocols recommended by the CDC.

Sincerely,



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