Cite as 2021 Ark. 30

SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

IN RE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	**Opinion Delivered:** February 12, 2021

PER CURIAM

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court of Arkansas delivered previous per curiam orders implementing emergency precautions to help protect the public from unnecessary risks. On March 11, 2020, Governor Hutchinson declared a "State of Emergency" for Arkansas related to the COVID-19 pandemic, which remains in effect. The courts of the State of Arkansas have remained open and shall continue to remain open. Today's actions are to protect the safety of jurors, litigants, attorneys, court personnel, and the public.

Public health officials in Arkansas have identified a continued high level of COVID-19 positive tests and hospitalizations. The continuing high level of infections in the state requires that we extend the suspension of jury trials that we previously announced on November 20, 2020. *See In re Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2020 Ark. 384 (per curiam). Therefore, we hereby suspend jury trials through April 30, 2021.

Please refer to the November 20, 2020 per curiam; aside from the end date of the jury-trial suspension, that Order remains in effect.

The Supreme Court of Arkansas is encouraged by the recent downward trend in COVID-19 infections in the state and by the increase in vaccinations. Going forward, we will continue to monitor these trends with the anticipation that, if positive progress continues, jury trials may resume May 1, 2021. We therefore recommend that circuit court judges, circuit court clerks, prosecuting attorneys, public defenders, and private attorneys take the next few weeks to prepare for the resumption of jury trials.

This Order is to be interpreted broadly for protection of the public from the risks associated with COVID-19. This Order applies statewide to all courts and court clerks' offices except administrative courts of the executive branch, federal courts, and federal court clerks' offices.

It is so ORDERED.