Court News ...

2021-02-26-01

The Supreme Court of South Carolina

RE: In-Person Proceedings and Jury Trials in Circuit, Family, Probate, and Master-in-Equity Courts

ORDER

For one year, our state and nation have battled the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, the South Carolina Judicial Branch has been forced to alter our courts' normal operating procedures. Most recently, jury trials, grand juries, and other in-person proceedings were halted in all courts statewide in an effort to protect the public, attorneys, judges, and court personnel.

As positive cases and percent positive tests have continued to fall, it is now possible to conduct in-person proceedings, jury trials, and grand juries so long as adequate safety protocols are observed. Pursuant to the provisions of Article V, Section 4 of the South Carolina Constitution,

IT IS ORDERED that Circuit, Family, Probate, and Master-in-Equity Courts statewide may begin holding in-person proceedings, other than jury trials, on Monday, March 15, 2021. Additionally, Circuit Courts may conduct in-person grand jury proceedings beginning March 15, 2021.

All courts statewide when conducting in-person proceedings shall continue to observe proper safety protocols as outlined in previous orders and memoranda issued by this Court, including, but not limited to:

- April 3, 2020 Order Regarding Operation of the Trial Courts During the Coronavirus Emergency (As Amended December 16, 2020)
- July 30, 2020 Order Regarding Required Use of Protective Masks in County and Municipal Courthouses

Nothing in this Order shall be construed to discourage conducting hearings and other proceedings via remote communication technology where practicable.

IT IS FURTHER ORDRED that Circuit Courts statewide may begin holding jury trials on Monday, April 5, 2021.

Any court that has not yet submitted a safety plan to Court Administration regarding the conducting of jury trials must do so as soon as possible. Any court that has previously submitted a jury trial plan and received approval is not required to resubmit its plan. Jury trial safety plans should be submitted via email to Leslie Taaffe at Court Administration (ltaaffe@sccourts.org).

This Order rescinds the following orders and memoranda previously issued:

- December 3, 2020 Order Regarding Circuit Court Jury Trials
- December 9, 2020 Order Regarding Selection of New Grand Jury Members

- January 6, 2021 Order Regarding In-Person Proceedings in Circuit, Family, Probate, and Master-in-Equity Courts (as amended January 8, 2021).

s/Donald W. Beatty
Donald W. Beatty
Chief Justice of South Carolina

Columbia, South Carolina
February 26, 2021