SUPREME COURT OF ARKANSAS

IN RE RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC/VACCINE ELIGIBILITY

Opinion delivered: March 4, 2021

In response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Supreme Court of Arkansas implemented emergency precautions to help protect the public from unnecessary risks. This response included the unprecedented suspension of jury trials in Arkansas. *See In re Response to COVID-19 Pandemic*, 2021 Ark. 30 (per curiam). This suspension has been necessary to protect the safety of jurors, litigants, attorneys, judges, court personnel, and the public. Despite the pandemic, attorneys, circuit clerks, district courts, circuit courts, and staff engage daily with numerous members of the public to protect these citizens' constitutional rights. These essential justice-system workers have placed themselves in harm's way for nearly a year, with severe consequences.

The Governor of the State of Arkansas carefully implemented a vaccination plan for the State and for essential workers in the legislative and executive branches of government. It is the duty of this court to define the essential workers within the justice system and where each should be placed in the priority schedule. This court, through the Chief Justice and senior staff, has received updates from the Governor's Office and the Arkansas Department of Health throughout the pandemic as we addressed concerns unique to our branch of government. This week the Governor expanded vaccine eligibility to include more essential workers. The Department of Homeland Security identified state-court judges and staff as essential critical infrastructure workers.[1]

The Arkansas Supreme Court, after careful review, has categorized the following as essential workers in Phase 1-B and orders them eligible for the vaccine immediately. We will add others as we monitor the Governor's statewide rollout.

- Circuit court judges with criminal dockets along with their trial-court assistants, court reporters, and other judicial staff;
- Circuit court judges with juvenile dockets along with their trial-court assistants, court reporters, and other judicial staff, including juvenile officers;
- District court judges, district court clerks, and their staff;
- Clerk of the Supreme Court and staff;
- Court-employed security officers;
- All circuit and county clerks and their staff;
- Administrative Office of the Courts staff who have regular contact with the public or other branches of government;
- Prosecuting attorneys, deputy prosecuting attorneys, and all public defenders and their respective staff;
- Attorneys with in-person appearances pending in the criminal division or juvenile division of circuit court; and
- Jury panel members slated to begin serving after April 30, 2021.

It is so ORDERED.

FOR THE COURT:

John Dan Kemp, Chief Justice

[1] *See* Guidance on the Essential Critical Infrastructure Workforce: Ensuring Community and National Resilience in COVID-19 Response, available at https://www.cisa.gov/publication/guidance-essential-critical-infrastructure-workforce, archived at https://perma.cc/39DR-8CWQ