SUPREME COURT
No. 2020-04

EXECUTIVE ORDER

(COVID-19 Pandemic Response)

In light of the ongoing public health crisis arising from the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic occurring across the world, the State of Emergency declared by the Governor on March 9, 2020, and guidance provided by the Rhode Island Department of Health in conjunction with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and pursuant to the authority invested in me by § 8-15-2 of the Rhode Island General Laws, the following order is hereby issued to protect the public health, safety, and welfare by reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19 and slowing the spread of the disease.

It is hereby ordered as follows:

Trials and Non-Essential Matters – Except for those matters specifically identified by court below as Emergency/Essential, all matters shall be continued as follows in accordance with the specific directives of the respective courts:

1. All Superior Court jury trials shall be continued until after April 17, 2020.
2. All Superior Court grand jury proceedings shall be suspended until after April 17, 2020.
3. All other matters in all courts within the unified judicial system shall be continued until after April 17, 2020.

Emergency/Essential Matters - The following matters shall continue to be heard before the appropriate court and in the appropriate judicial building[1] as of the date of this Executive Order.

Supreme
Emergency petitions
Petitions for extraordinary relief

[1] The term judicial building as used herein includes the Licht Judicial Complex, 250 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903; Garrahy Judicial Complex, One Dorrance Plaza, Providence, Rhode Island 02903; Noel Judicial Complex, 222 Quaker Lane, Warwick, Rhode Island 02886; McGrath Judicial Complex, 4800 Tower Hill Road, Wakefield, Rhode Island 02879; Murray Judicial Complex, 45 Washington Square, Newport, Rhode Island 02840; Rhode Island Traffic Tribunal, 670 New London Avenue, Cranston, Rhode Island 02920; Fogarty Judicial Annex, 24 Weybosset Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903; Judicial Records Center, 5 Hill Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island 02860.

Superior	
Criminal	Rule 5A Bail Petitions
	Presentments as violators
	Violation hearings with witnesses (10 days)
	Warrant cancellations
Civil	Extreme risk protection orders
	Temporary restraining order petitions
	Supreme Court appeals (20 days)
Family	
Restraining order hearings	
Emergency motions	
Ex parte motions	
Previously advertised cases issued by the juvenile clerk's office in *The Providence Journal*	
Probable cause hearings	
Court-ordered drug screenings	
District	
Criminal	Arraignments for: capital offenses, domestic violence offenses, alcohol-related driving offenses, fugitive from justice and other crimes of violence involving public safety
	Bail hearings
	Rule 32F/46G violation presentments and hearings
	Competency hearings
Civil	Domestic restraining orders
	Civil court certification calendar (mental health)
Workers' Compensation Court	
Pre-trial hearings	
Traffic Tribunal	
Pending license/registration suspension hearings	

Deadlines - All payment dates and court-imposed filing deadlines are hereby extended for thirty (30) calendar days from the date of this Order. Requests for extensions to applicable statutes of limitations necessitated by the current health crisis shall be entertained by the respective courts after thirty (30) calendar days from the date of this Order. Where available, parties and their counsel should continue to utilize the electronic filing system for appropriate and timely filings. Pro se litigants may utilize the electronic filing system or submit filings by mail or other means, as allowed pursuant to administrative orders promulgated by each of the respective courts.

Judicial Buildings – The following procedures shall be instituted in each judicial building:

1. Judicial officers and essential personnel shall be allowed to enter the judicial buildings.
2. Only litigants and other necessary parties required to appear in connection with the emergency matters identified above shall be allowed to enter the judicial buildings.
3. The Judicial Records Center and Fogarty Judicial Annex shall be closed to the public.

Video – Courts are encouraged to utilize videoconferencing tools whenever possible.

Duration - The foregoing measures shall remain in place through April 17, 2020 or until such time that a new Executive Order is issued revoking or amending this Order.

Court-specific Guidance - The Presiding Justice of the Superior Court, the Chief Judge of the Family Court, the Chief Judge of the District Court, the Chief Judge of the Workers' Compensation Court, and Chief Magistrate of the Traffic Tribunal may promulgate appropriate administrative orders in accordance with the foregoing directives and are authorized to make appropriate and limited exceptions where necessary and/or constitutionally required. Any requested exceptions to the foregoing order shall be heard and decided by the highest-ranking judicial officer in each of the respective courts.

Access to Information – The public is encouraged to seek further information available on the Judiciary's web-site at www.courts.ri.gov.

Entered as an Executive Order this 17th day of March, 2020.

Enter:

/s/
Paul A. Suttell
Chief Justice

By Order,

/s/
Clerk