

COVID-19: Tennessee Litigation Update | November 17, 2020

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Supreme Court Issues New Order Related to Court Operation During COVID-19

In response to the increased number of COVID-19 cases in the state, the Tennessee Supreme Court issued an Order on November 17, 2020 designed to protect all of the participants in the judicial system and the public at large while keeping the courts open and accessible to carry out essential constitutional functions and time-sensitive proceedings. This is the Court's sixth order related to the pandemic since it declared a state of emergency for the judicial branch on March 13, 2020.

This Order suspends jury trials from November 23, 2020 through January 31, 2021, unless an exemption is granted by the Chief Justice. Jury trials were previously suspended from March 13 to July 3, 2020. In addition, the Order:

- Directs judicial districts to revisit and strictly adhere to their previously approved reopening plans
- Reiterates that the Court's July 9, 2020 Order mandating face coverings for all persons who enter the courthouse for court-related business is still in full effect
- Encourages video conferencing whenever possible
- Reminds judges and attorneys that they have an ethical obligation to comply with Court Orders and the reopening plans drafted by the judicial districts
- Prohibits anyone with COVID-19 from participating in an in-person proceeding

In addition, the Order directs judges to schedule and conduct in-person hearings in a manner that minimizes wait times in courthouse hallways, which often have limited space for social distancing.

A copy of the Order may be found [here](#).

Courthouse closing information may be found [here](#).

Questions? [Contact one of MGC's litigation attorneys](#).

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