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NoraV Borja

IN THE
SUPREME COURT
OF THE
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

**IN RE COURT OPERATIONS AND PROCEEDINGS
IN RESPONSE TO NOVEL CORONAVIRUS DISEASE**

SUPREME COURT NO. 2020-ADM-0002-MSC

ORDER

¶ 1 On March 13, 2020, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency in response to the public health threat posed by the pandemic novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19). On March 17, 2020, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres declared a state of public health emergency and continued the state of significant emergency in an amended Executive Order 2020-04. In the executive order, Governor Torres announced that COVID-19 constitutes a significant public health threat, urging residents to take precautionary measures, and implementing a number of directives.

¶ 2 In light of these measures, and to protect the health and safety of court employees and the general public, under the Supreme Court's inherent and supervisory powers in Article IV, Section 3 of the NMI Constitution and 1 CMC § 3401(a), the Court ORDERS the following:

A. General Administrative Provisions

(1) Effective Tuesday, March 17, 2020 until Friday, April 3, 2020, the following Judiciary facilities shall be closed to the public:

- a. Guma' Hustisia, Susupe, Saipan;
- b. Kotten Tinian, San Jose, Tinian;
- c. Centron Hustisia, Sinapalo, Rota;
- d. Judiciary alternate sites:
 - i. Marianas Business Plaza, Susupe, Saipan;
 - ii. Drug Court Division at Sister Remedios Community Center, Chalan Kanoa, Saipan;
 - iii. Office of Adult Probation Supervision Satellite Office, Susupe, Saipan; and
 - iv. Law Revision Commission, Susupe, Saipan.

- (2) Essential court operations shall continue, consistent with this Order.
- (3) Judiciary employees will receive direction from their respective managers as to work reporting requirements.

B. Supreme Court

- (1) All electronic filing and service deadlines and procedures remain in effect.

C. Superior Court Criminal Actions scheduled between Tuesday, March 17, 2020 and Friday, April 3, 2020

- (1) All criminal trials are continued. The Superior Court shall promptly issue an order re-setting a trial date or a telephonic or video status conference.
- (2) All other criminal proceedings, such as initial appearances, arraignments, and detention hearings shall proceed as scheduled and be conducted by telephonic or video conferencing when possible.

D. Superior Court Traffic Cases scheduled between Tuesday, March 17, 2020 and Friday, April 3, 2020

- (1) All traffic proceedings are continued unless otherwise ordered by the Superior Court.
- (2) All payments for citations are extended until the continued hearing date.

E. Superior Court Civil Actions scheduled between Tuesday, March 17, 2020 and Friday, April 3, 2020

- (1) All civil trials are continued. The Superior Court shall promptly issue an order re-setting a trial date or a telephonic or video status conference.
- (2) All civil motions and conferences may be heard telephonically or by video conference, as ordered by the Superior Court.

F. Superior Court Small Claims Cases scheduled between Tuesday, March 17, 2020 and Friday, April 3, 2020

- (1) All small claims proceedings shall be continued pending further order by the Superior Court.

G. Drug Court Cases scheduled between Tuesday, March 17, 2020 and Friday, April 3, 2020

- (1) Drug Court case management, proceedings, and meetings shall be conducted electronically, telephonically, or by video conference.

H. Superior Court Filing & Service between Tuesday, March 17, 2020 and Friday, April 3, 2020

- (1) Unless otherwise ordered, all existing civil and criminal case filing deadlines remain in effect.
- (2) Instead of in-person filings, all criminal case filings shall be submitted by email to court.info@NMJudiciary.com. If electronic filing (“e-filing”) is impossible, documents may be submitted via registered mail.
- (3) Instead of in-person filings, all civil case filings will be accepted by the following methods:

- a. E-filing;
- b. If e-filing is unavailable, documents may be filed by email to court.info@NMIJudiciary.com; or
- c. If e-filing is impossible, documents may be submitted by registered mail.

(4) Any filing that requires payment of a filing fee shall be paid online if available, but if court users cannot do so, filing fees will be deferred until Monday, April 6, 2020.

(5) All service of documents shall be through electronic means or by registered mail.

¶ 3

Effective immediately, the following are prohibited from entering Judiciary facilities:

- a. Persons who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been directed to quarantine, isolate, or self-monitor;
- b. Persons who have been to a country identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as having a COVID-19 outbreak inclusive of China, Iran, Japan, South Korea, and European countries within the last 14 days; or
- c. Persons who reside with or have been in close contact with someone who has been in any of the aforementioned countries in the last 14 days.

¶ 4

This Order will be revised as circumstances warrant.

SO ORDERED this 17th day of March, 2020.

/s/ _____
ALEXANDRO C. CASTRO
Chief Justice

/s/ _____
JOHN A. MANGLONA
Associate Justice

/s/ _____
PERRY B. INOS
Associate Justice