

March 11, 2021

At: 4:30 p.m.

William T. Walsh

Clerk

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY**

IN RE: FURTHER SUSPENSION OF IN-PERSON :  
JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS AND LIMITATION : **EXTENSION OF**  
OF GRAND JURY PROCEEDINGS, DUE TO COVID-19: **STANDING ORDER 2021-02**

**WHEREAS**, due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the National Emergency, declared on March 13, 2020, was continued by President Biden on February 24, 2021, and the national public health emergency, first declared on January 31, 2020, was extended by the federal government through April 20, 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, in response to the continuing pandemic, on February 17, 2021, the Governor of the State of New Jersey again extended the Public Health Emergency, first declared on March 9, 2020, for an additional 30 days; and

**WHEREAS**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health authorities continue to advise taking precautions to reduce the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 and to slow the spread of the disease by, among other things, wearing face coverings, restricting the size of group gatherings of people, especially indoor gatherings, and maintaining six feet of physical distance from others (“social distancing”); and

**WHEREAS**, due to the continuing pandemic, the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey (“Court”) still observes its COVID-19 Recovery Guidelines, mandating the wearing of facial coverings, social distancing, and limited elevator occupancy in the District’s courthouses, and is not expected to resume normal operations before the expiration of this Extension; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to the CARES Act and its Standing Order 2021-03, this Court’s authorization of the use of video and telephone conferencing, under certain circumstances and with the consent of the defendant, for various criminal case events, during the course of the COVID-19 emergency, remains in effect until June 9, 2021, unless terminated or vacated prior thereto; and

**WHEREAS**, due to the exigent circumstances created by COVID-19, the Court finds it necessary to continue all civil and criminal jury selections and jury trials to June 1, 2021, through its entry of Standing Order 2021-04; and

**WHEREAS**, due to the ongoing risk of infection from COVID-19, the Court’s other prior Standing Orders, applicable to all persons seeking entry into and occupying this District’s courthouses, and which require the wearing of face coverings (2020-13), establish a COVID-19 protocol for all entrants (2020-14), and institute temperature screenings of all entrants (2020-16), remain in effect; and

**WHEREAS**, nationwide, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases is approaching 30 million, with over 542,000 total deaths; and

**WHEREAS**, in New Jersey, the number of confirmed cases of the disease now exceeds 729,000, with more than 21,000 confirmed deaths; and

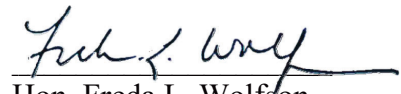
**WHEREAS**, under the New Jersey COVID-19 Vaccination Plan, full vaccination of much of the federal judiciary and of the general public under the age of 65 will not occur until mid-May, at the earliest; and

**WHEREAS**, the effectiveness of the available vaccines against current, and potentially, future, more virulent variants of the virus, is unknown, creating an uncertain impact on the public health; and

**WHEREAS**, in response to the continuing, severe effects of COVID-19 and its variants, presenting a serious threat to public health and safety, the Court deems it necessary to extend its prior suspension, entered in Standing Order 2021-02, of all in-person judicial proceedings, in both civil and criminal cases, regardless of whether the criminal defendant is in or out of custody,

**IT IS, THEREFORE**, on this 11th day of March 2021, **ORDERED THAT:**

1. Except as otherwise provided herein, all in-person judicial proceedings in this District, in both civil and criminal cases, shall be suspended through June 1, 2021.
2. Notwithstanding paragraph 1. above, beginning on April 5, 2021, if a defendant does not consent to proceed via video or teleconference for an initial appearance, arraignment, plea or sentencing, the proceeding shall be held in-person, regardless of whether the defendant is in or out of custody.
3. Notwithstanding the provisions of this Extension, the provisions of the Court's Standing Order 2021-03 ("In Re: Video Conferencing and Teleconferencing for Criminal Proceedings under The CARES Act (Fourth Extension of Amended Standing Order 2020-06)") shall remain in full force and effect.
4. Grand jury sittings in this District shall be limited and convened only to the extent deemed necessary and warranted under the circumstances, until April 5, 2021, at which time, grand jury proceedings shall resume as normal.

  
Hon. Freda L. Wolfson  
U.S. Chief District Judge