

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS, BLAIR COUNTY
24TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

IN RE: 24TH Judicial District –

DECLARATION OF JUDICIAL EMERGENCY

Supreme Court:
No. 20 WM 2020
Blair County No.:
No. 2020 MD 0003

EXTENDED ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

AND NOW, this 20^r day of November 2020, upon consideration of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court's previous Orders of March 16, 2020 declaring a general, Statewide Judicial Emergency, Order of April 28, 2020, extending the general, Statewide Emergency, and Order of May 27, 2020 ceasing the Statewide Judicial Emergency as of June 1, 2020, and permitting local declaration of judicial emergency, as well as this Court's previous Administrative Orders dated **April 24, 2020, May 29, 2020, July 1, 2020, and August 31, 2020**, it is hereby ORDERED, DIRECTED, and DECREED as follows:

JUDICIAL EMERGENCY EXTENDED

1. The local judicial emergency for Blair County necessitated by the Covid 19 pandemic shall be extended through April 30, 2021 for the specific reasons set forth below and for the time frames prescribed.
2. The number of persons in Blair County and in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania infected by Covid 19 is at its highest rate since the beginning of the pandemic. The number of persons hospitalized in UPMC Altoona is the greatest since the beginning of the pandemic.

3. The Secretary of the PA Department of Health has issued a new order November 17, 2020, that all individuals, age two and older, must wear a face covering while indoors or in an enclosed space, where another person or persons who are not members of the individual's household are present, irrespective of physical distance.

AUTHORIZATION TO CONDUCT PROCEEDINGS BY ADVANCED COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

4. From the date of this Order through April 30, 2021, all Rules of Criminal Procedure prohibiting the use of audio/visual advanced communication technology continue to be suspended. Common Pleas Judges and Magisterial District Court Judges are authorized and encouraged whenever possible to continue the following:
 - a. Using advanced communication technology, including BlueJeans, Zoom, telephone and audio/visual devices;
 - b. Staggering court appearance times to reduce contact;
 - c. Limiting meetings, conferences and other gatherings to advanced communication technology or essential participants to reduce contact.
5. Hearings requiring personal appearances shall be scheduled at the discretion of the presiding judge.

REQUIREMENT TO WEAR MASKS/PPE

6. Court participants and attendees who appear personally in and/or around the courtroom and courtroom spaces, hallways and waiting rooms, including court staff, counsel, and witnesses, (including lay witnesses, expert witnesses, and

professional witnesses, including police) shall wear protective masks or personal protective equipment ("PPE"), like face shields, (although these are not as effective as masks and are thus disfavored) and practice social distancing techniques in the Court of Common Pleas and in the Magisterial District Courts. Persons who cannot wear protective face masks/PPE for medical reasons shall appear at court events by advanced communications technology.

7. Individuals permitted general access to any court facility or proceeding, including media, spectators, and family members of victims and defendants shall be required to wear protective face masks or PPE, maintain appropriate social distancing, and shall comply with all safety guidelines issued by the Court and Staff.

ACCESS TO COURT PROCEEDINGS

8. Only necessary and authorized individuals shall be allowed entry to any court facility to minimize person-to-person contact. Members of the public, including the media, are permitted to observe court proceedings by advanced communication technology, or on a limited basis in person depending on the capacity of the room where the event is held and the nature of the event.

Other than media representatives, any person wishing to observe a court proceeding, including family members of victims, witnesses, and defendants, shall themselves, or through an agency they are in contact with, like the District Attorney's Victim/Witness office or Family Services of Blair County, **contact the Blair County Court Administrator's Office one (1) business day prior to the proceeding in order for arrangements to be made to effectuate that**

person's attendance, either by advanced communication technology, or in person, while complying with CDC guidelines and Blair County safety measures. Court Administration may be contacted by leaving a detailed message at 814-693-3050 requesting attendance at a court proceeding.

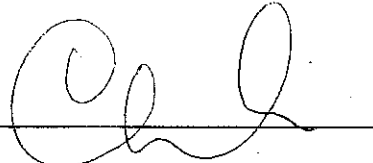
Failure to make prior arrangements to attend such proceeding may result in access to the proceeding being denied. Access by remote communication technology may be required.

SUSPENSION OF RULE 600

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and unavailability of sufficient security staff to conduct jury selection from November 16-20 and Nov. 23, 24, and 25, the jury trials that were to be selected on those dates are cancelled. Pa. Rule of Crim. Procedure 600 is suspended from November 25, 2020 through January 23, 2021.

The purpose of this Administrative Order is to continue the functioning of the Blair County Court system in a safe and efficient manner while adhering to CDC and Pennsylvania Department of Health Guidelines in order to protect all court personnel, court users and the public.

BY THE COURT:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'E. Doyle', is written over a horizontal line.

Elizabeth A. Doyle, P.J.