

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT

IN RE:
COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE EXIGENT
CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY COVID-19

GENERAL ORDER

WHEREAS, the President of the United States has declared a national emergency, and the Governor of the State of Connecticut has declared a public health emergency throughout the State;

WHEREAS, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has advised people to take precautions in light of the COVID-19 virus (coronavirus) outbreak, and has noted that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus, through, among other means, social distancing;

AND

WHEREAS, the District Court continues to review its operations to identify measures that will help slow the spread of the virus by minimizing contact between persons, while at the same time preserving its core mission of serving the public through the fair and impartial administration of justice;

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED, effective immediately, that:

- (1) All criminal jury trials (and related jury selections) scheduled to commence prior to November 2, 2020, before any district or magistrate judge in any courthouse in the District of Connecticut, shall be continued pending further order of the Court. Judges may schedule criminal jury selections and trials to begin on or after November 2, 2020 in the hope that circumstances may permit them to proceed safely. In light of the large backlog of trial-ready cases, the lengthy periods of detention experienced by some defendants, and public health guidance about the need to avoid lengthy exposure to other persons in indoor spaces, priority will be given to short trials involving defendants who have been detained the longest;
- (2) Due to: the public health risks associated with summoning large groups of prospective jurors who would be required to sit in close proximity to each other during jury selection and, if selected, during trial and deliberations; the Court's

reduced ability to obtain an adequate spectrum of prospective jurors due to the public's perceptions of the risks associated with jury service; and the effect of the above public health recommendations on the availability of counsel and Court staff to be present in the courtroom; the time period of the continuances effectuated by paragraph 1 of this General Order will be excluded under the Speedy Trial Act. The Court specifically finds that the ends of justice served by ordering the continuances outweigh the best interests of the public and each defendant in a speedy trial, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 3161(h)(7)(A); and

- (3) Because they require fewer jurors and fewer persons in the courtroom (e.g., U.S. Marshals), judges may, after considering both the interests of justice and the risks to public health in particular cases, conduct civil jury selections and trials beginning September 1, 2020. Priority will be given to short civil trials, which may involve the use of safety measures being developed by the Court to protect jurors, litigants, counsel, Court staff, and the public. Counsel who wish to propose a particular case for trial should file a joint motion for trial with the presiding judge.

SO ORDERED:

Dated: 7/14/2020
Bridgeport, CT


s/Stefan R. Underhill
Stefan R. Underhill
Chief United States District Judge