

To All Court Staff, Jail Staff, and Attorneys:

In response to the Office of Court Administration's (OCA) recommendations concerning the coronavirus and its impact, courts in Hopkins County will limit judicial proceedings to avoid gatherings of large groups of people until at least April 1<sup>st</sup>. The Courts will avoid, to the degree practicable, "non-essential" in person court proceedings. Please be ready to work with the various courts to reschedule non-essential proceedings as needed.

**Essential** proceedings which need court action include, but are not limited to, criminal magistration proceedings, CPS removal hearings, temporary restraining orders/temporary injunctions, juvenile detention hearings, family violence protective orders, emergency guardianship, and certain mental health proceedings. In addition, jail docket for plea hearings and non-jury trials would also be considered essential hearings. Additionally, child custody issues in certain circumstances could be considered an essential hearing, to be determined by the presiding judge.

With respect to the docket set in the **8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court** on March 19<sup>th</sup>, we will work with you to reset defendants who are out on bond to a date in April or May. They will not need to appear in order to have their case(s) reset. For those in jail for which a plea agreement has been reached for the Court's consideration, we will have those individuals brought over from the jail on an as-needed basis. Any currently scheduled bench trials will proceed as previously scheduled.

In the **354<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court**, only essential proceedings in the area of family law litigation or civil matters will be set. If you have a case currently set, please contact the District Clerk of Judge Aiken's office to determine if your case will be reset from its present setting or whether you need to appear.

In the **County Court for Rains County**, please contact the County Clerk or Judge Wolfe's office to determine whether you are required to attend any hearings this month for which you were previously noticed to attend or whether the case has been rescheduled.

To the degree hearings can be held via telephonic or video remote appearances, the Courts are open to such accommodations. Obviously, pre-planning will be required in order to facilitate such hearings. Please be aware that the Open Courts provision of the Constitution will generally require that the public have access to proceedings.

*Any persons with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, a fever, or who are coughing or sneezing should contact the court before appearing.*

This is a fluid situation and additional or prolonged measures may be needed. I invite your input and please do not hesitate to contact the respective Courts with questions or concerns.

Eddie Northcutt, Judge  
8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court  
Local Administrative Judge