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JUDGE, 114TH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT
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Smith County Courthouse
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ORDER

This Order is in response to the recent outbreak of a novel coronavirus in the United States and the State of Texas. The World Health Organization has declared the disease it causes, COVID-19, a global pandemic, having spread across more than 120 countries. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") has provided guidance about appropriate community response to COVID-19, including multiple types of mitigation strategies generally aimed at reducing or avoiding exposure to infected individuals.

Governor Greg Abbott has declared a state of disaster in all counties of the State of Texas [Abbott Order]. The Texas Supreme Court and Court of Criminal Appeals have issued a joint order regarding modification of court proceedings [Joint Order]. Smith County has cancelled all jury trials until April 13. It is unknown whether jury trials will be able to resume at that time. Further, the Office of Court Administration ("OCA") has recommended that all non-essential hearings be cancelled or conducted by video or teleconferencing. The courts are also encouraged to limit or do away with large docket calls.

I am required to notify you that:

every participant in a proceeding is required to alert the court if the participant has, or knows of another participant who has, COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms, or a fever, cough, or sneezing.

All such notifications shall be made to the Court, in writing, prior to your appearance, if any appearance becomes necessary.

As of the date of this Order, there have been confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Smith County, Texas. The CDC and NET Health have recommended social distancing to further limit community spread of COVID-19. This Court is concerned with the health and safety of the public, Court employees,

staff of other entities with whom Court personnel interact, litigants, counsel, interpreters, law enforcement officials, and jurors who must sit in close quarters to be selected, hear evidence, and deliberate.

Accordingly, the Court issues the following orders:

1. All jury trials (criminal and civil) scheduled to begin on any date from this date through April 10, 2020 are continued. This Court may issue further orders of additional continuances depending upon information received from the Texas Supreme Court, Court of Criminal Appeals, Governor of the State of Texas, Smith County Commissioner's Court, and public health entities. These continuances do not continue any pending deadlines other than the pre-trial hearing and trial dates. Any attorney seeking to modify such deadlines should file appropriate motions with the Court.
2. The Court may continue to hold bench trials, in-person hearings, plea and sentencing hearings, and other court proceedings as appropriate, on a case by case basis. Counsel may seek relief from those matters by appropriate motions. The use of telephonic proceedings are welcomed and encouraged. OCA is working on a statewide solution for remote court appearances. This Court will post any OCA solution on the Court's page on the Smith County website [114th District Court] as soon as it is available.
3. The Smith County Courthouse, including the District Clerk's Office, is currently open for business, except on further order from the Commissioners Court. All civil and criminal filings should continue to be made by e-filing.
4. Unless extended or superceded, this Order will remain in effect through April 12, 2020.

ORDERED AND SIGNED this 17th day of March, 2020.



JUDGE CHRISTI KENNEDY