



THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS OF STARK COUNTY

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PRESS RELEASE: ***TEMPORARY ORDER IN RESPONSE TO PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS***

The Judges of the General Division of the Stark County Court of Common Pleas have authorized measures to ensure the courthouse will remain open through the COVID-19 public health crisis. A temporary emergency order was filed on March 13, 2020. The order authorizes actions to maintain essential court functions and operations during the crisis. The order will allow the court to maintain necessary staffing levels. The order will minimize and avoid large crowds in the courthouse by restricting non-essential access to the facility. The Judges will increasingly rely on technologies to remotely conduct business in both civil and criminal cases. Specific actions include:

- Enhanced sanitation protocols are being followed in the courthouse and Bow Building.
- Courthouse access is being restricted to essential parties and personnel.
- Jury trials are suspended for two weeks. Jurors who have been summoned must still call-in. The jury policy will be reviewed every week.
- All hearings involving jailed defendants will be conducted by video.
- All civil pretrial hearings will be conducted by conference call.
- Plans are being developed for staggered employee shifts and work-at-home options.
- Judges will meet weekly to reevaluate needs and policies.

The temporary emergency order reflects the importance of all courts in the daily civic life of our nation. And the order recognizes that the essential functions of courts are heightened in a public health crisis. There will likely be disputes over quarantine orders, mandatory testing, and contract disputes as a result of government emergency orders. The courts are the only legal forum in a public health crisis to challenge alleged excesses of government authority. And the Common Pleas Court is responsible for handling and supervising a record number of felony cases and thousands of local civil disputes. If the court closes, the constitution closes. Public safety will be at risk. The emergency order helps to ensure that the General Division of the Stark County Court of Common Pleas WILL NOT CLOSE.

The emergency order is temporary. The crisis adjustments are all within the constitutional authority of the court. And the order is intended to protect the constitutional rights of all court users. Courts balance the tightrope walk between individual freedoms and public interest. During a time of public crisis, that tightrope is raised high above the ground. The commitment of the court to maintain a healthy and neutral balance in a time of heightened anxiety, fears, and even panic is the goal of the General Division Judges. That commitment is reflected in the temporary emergency order.

The Order is enclosed with this release and is posted on the Court's website: <https://www.starkcountyohio.gov/common-pleas/news>. Questions may be directed to the Court Administration Office at 330-451-7707.

FILED
MAR 13 2020
LOUIS P. GIAVASIS
STARK COUNTY OHIO
CLERK OF COURTS

**IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS
GENERAL DIVISION
STARK COUNTY, OHIO**

2020-MI MS47-27

**TEMPORARY ORDER IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19
(CORONAVIRUS) PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

The General Division Judges of the Stark County Court of Common Pleas make the following Findings of Fact:

1. On March 9, 2020 Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued Executive Order 2020-01D “Declaring a State of Emergency” in response to the growing COVID-19 public health crisis.
2. On March 11, 2020 the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 to be a global “pandemic” requiring “urgent and aggressive action” to control the spread of the virus.
3. On March 11, 2020 the first “community transfer” positive case of COVID-19 in the State of Ohio was confirmed to be in Stark County.

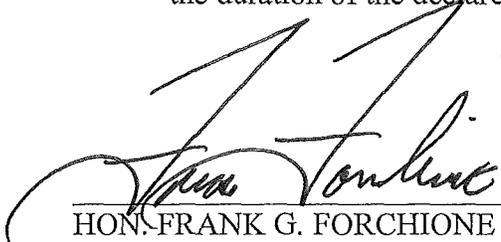
Based upon these Findings of Fact, the General Division of the Court of Common Pleas has developed a continuum of flexible responses in case the public health crisis escalates. The continuum of responses is intended to protect public health, to maintain essential court functions, and to continue to protect the rights of all individuals subject to the authority of the Court.

THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY ORDERED:

1. The General Division Local Rules of Court may be temporarily adapted to allow Court flexibility, within Constitutional limits, in response to the public health emergency.

A TRUE COPY TESTE:
LOUIS P. GIAVASIS, CLERK
By *M. Mayle* Deputy
Date *3-13-20*

2. The General Division security policies may be temporarily amended or supplemented to protect public health while maintaining essential court functions.
3. The General Division Employee Handbook provisions may be temporarily adjusted to maintain essential court operations and functions.
4. The General Division authorizes the use of audiovisual devices and technologies for all actions and proceedings.
5. The public health emergency may be considered to be a finding of good cause for continuances deemed necessary by assigned Judges on a case-by-case basis.
6. The Court will have the lawful authority, within constitutional limits, to do and direct to be done all things necessary to ensure the orderly and efficient administration of justice for the duration of the declared public health emergency.



HON. FRANK G. FORCHIONE
ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE



HON. KRISTIN G. FARMER



HON. CHRYSSA N. HARTNETT



HON. NATALIE R. HAUPT



HON. TARYN L. HEATH