

**From:** [Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor](#)  
**Subject:** Pandemic Update and Materials  
**Date:** Friday, March 20, 2020 2:30:37 PM  
**Attachments:** [CJMOC- Gov press conf comments FINAL.pdf](#)  
[Guidance to Local Courts 03.20.20.pdf](#)  
[2020 Remote Technology Grant.pdf](#)

---

Dear Colleagues,

I had the opportunity to address the public yesterday at the daily press conference of the Governor. I'm attaching my remarks in the event you were unable to view the press conference.

I stressed the need for both the courts and clerks' offices to remain open during this COVID-19 pandemic. But it cannot be business as usual... modifications must be made. Like the Supreme Court, you may identify employees to telework. You may also continue trials and other matters for good cause and based upon reasonableness. But the means to provided essential services and essential proceedings must be part of your operation. This means a pared down staff, limitation to the physical building to all but those who have a court order to appear or have a matter to file with the clerk's office. However, even clerk's offices with e-filing must maintain the opportunity for those without e-filing capacity to submit paper filings. It is an access to justice issue.

You are strongly encouraged to suspend in-person proceedings and non-essential appearances. If you have the capacity to hold hearings via video do so. If you do not, use conference callings via the telephone. Attached you will find information about the Supreme Court's 4 million dollar grant program that will allow qualifying courts to acquire the technology to enhance their technological capacities. You can access the grant information and application [here](#).

Eviction proceedings, small claims, traffic, and civil matters are all appropriate matters to be continued. Eviction proceedings present a particular concern as relayed to me by Legal Aid. Legal aids are concerned that where courts continue to accept filings and hold eviction hearings as usual, the courtrooms and hallways are often gatherings of more than 10 people. In addition, granting and/or acting on writs puts vulnerable Ohioans in danger of being homeless during this crisis, when people are asked to stay home.

As for civil matters, keep in mind that even if trials are scheduled two to four months out, there will be a need to consider continuances. That means discovery orders need to be reassessed too. With the curtailment of flights/travel and physical interaction, discovery/depositions may not be able to be timely completed. The current burden on the medical community may limit access to medical records and expert testimony. Based upon predictions, I do not believe that court operations will return to anything approaching normal until mid-summer at the earliest.

You are not only the authority in your courtrooms, you are community leaders. You would not be in your position if your fellow citizens did not trust that you would act in their best interest within the confines of the law. Now is the time to show intelligence, compassion, respect and to truly live up to the title 'public servant'.

Attached are the remarks I gave yesterday at the press conference and a document entitled

Guidance to Local Courts. Please review both.

As always, the Supreme Court is a resource for you. You may access COVID-19 pandemic related documents on our webpage [here](#). Please don't hesitate to call upon us if you have a question.

Keep calm, carry on and God bless you all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maureen O'Connor". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

Maureen O'Connor  
Chief Justice