

MAY - 7 2021

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS

JAMES W. McCORMACK, CLERK
By: 
DEP CLERK

IN RE: COURT OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER THIRTEEN

The pandemic continues but the circumstances are improving. Vaccines are widely available, and many in the Eastern District of Arkansas have been inoculated. While the pace has slowed, that effort continues. Hospitalizations and active cases are down substantially from the winter numbers. The Court held three pioneer jury trials in March and April, one civil and two criminal. The civil trial lasted two weeks. Each criminal trial lasted several days. The parties wanted to proceed and the lawyers were ready; representative pools of jurors were summoned; citizens were willing to serve as jurors; and mitigation measures worked. As best the Court can tell, no COVID-19 exposures or infections resulted from these proceedings. A verdict was returned in each case.

Effective 24 May 2021, therefore, the Court will resume holding criminal and civil jury trials as scheduled. District Judges will coordinate with the Clerk of Court to minimize the number of people in our courthouses at any one time. In Little Rock, there will be one slot available to start a jury trial in the morning and one slot available in the afternoon on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays. Trials will also proceed as scheduled in Helena and Jonesboro, subject to the

limitations in those smaller courthouses. Enhanced screening of potential jurors will continue. Our standard mitigation measures—masking and distancing—will continue in all proceedings, including trials. Bench trials will also resume as scheduled starting on May 24th. Depending upon the circumstances presented in particular cases, the Court will hold video teleconferences, teleconferences, or in-person hearings in non-trial matters. Remote proceedings will continue to be preferred, especially where the transport of persons in custody is involved. The CARES Act authorizations remain in effect until 21 June 2021 for remote proceedings in certain criminal matters. See Administrative Order Eleven. On behalf of our Court, I will review those authorizations again before that date.

All the active and senior United States District Judges and United States Magistrate Judges for the Eastern District of Arkansas concur in this Administrative Order.

So Ordered.

D.P. Marshall Jr.

D.P. Marshall Jr.
Chief Judge

7 May 2021
