

VIRGINIA:

In the Supreme Court of Virginia held at the Supreme Court Building in the City of Richmond on Tuesday the 29th day of June, 2021.

IN RE: TWENTY-FOURTH ORDER EXTENDING DECLARATION OF JUDICIAL EMERGENCY IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 EMERGENCY

The ongoing judicial emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impede the operation of Virginia's courts, and to limit the courts' ability to ensure (i) immediate access for litigants and others and (ii) that schedules or time deadlines imposed by court order, rule, or statute are met. Accordingly, under the constitutional, statutory, and inherent authority of the Supreme Court of Virginia, and based upon the further request of the Governor pursuant to Va. Code § 17.1-330(A)(i), the Court unanimously enters this Declaration of Judicial Emergency which shall apply to all circuit and district courts of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and effective July 1, 2021, ORDERS the following:

1. Safety Protocols

Chief judges and presiding judges of all courts should exercise their discretion in determining how best to safely operate their respective courts, including how to safely conduct jury trials, and, in doing so, may follow the guidance of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the Virginia Department of Health, with respect to safety protocols, including physical distancing and capacity restrictions and requiring a mask covering the mouth and nose.

2. Admission to Courthouse

All courts and security personnel shall continue to screen individuals entering the courthouse if recommended, and to the extent recommended, by the Virginia Department of Health.

3. Speedy Trial Act

While the Speedy Trial Act, Va. Code § 19.2-243, has its own tolling provisions, speedy trial act deadlines continue to be tolled by this order during the ongoing Period of Judicial Emergency.

4. Electronic Signatures

All courts continue to be authorized to accept pleadings, orders and other documents that are electronically signed, including those where the electronic signature is accomplished by scanning.

This Order shall be in effect from July 1, 2021 through July 21, 2021, unless amended by future order. Accordingly, the Period of Judicial Emergency now extends from March 16, 2020, through July 21, 2021. The Declaration of Judicial Emergency may be extended for additional periods as provided in Va. Code § 17.1-330(E). It is so ORDERED.



(SEAL)

Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Virginia