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Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles

NEWS RELEASE

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Media Relations

publicinfo@lacourt.org

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
November 23, 2020**

PRESIDING JUDGE KEVIN C. BRAZILE ISSUES ORDER TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ALLOWED IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY COURTHOUSES AMID SPIKE IN COUNTY AND STATEWIDE COVID-19 INFECTIONS

EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, public access to courthouses is restricted to authorized persons only and measures to enforce social distancing in courthouse hallways and courtrooms will be strictly enforced as coronavirus cases and hospitalizations surge in Los Angeles County, Presiding Judge Kevin C. Brazile announced today.

Under General Order (2020-GEN-25-00) issued today, public access to courthouses is limited at all times to judicial officers, court employees, co-lessees, Judicial Council staff, vendors, jurors, mediators, authorized persons (including news media representatives and news reporters), attorneys, litigants and witnesses with matters on calendar, and individuals with confirmed appointments.

Recently, despite mandatory and previous General Orders (See General Orders filed [June 5, 2020](#), [July 6, 2020](#), and [October 13, 2020](#)) requiring the use of face masks and social distancing and ubiquitous signage in each courthouse reiterating the face mask and social distancing mandates, attorneys, litigants, and others routinely remove their masks, wear their mask improperly, and/or fail to observe social distancing while in courthouses. Non-compliance with the basic protective measures that this Court has repeatedly required by way of prior General Orders to reduce the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus may increase COVID-19 infections.

In the interest of enforcing social distancing and to reduce the number of people in courthouses, effective Monday, November 30, members of the public, not otherwise referenced above, who wish to attend a court proceeding may do so upon advance request and at the discretion of the judicial officer presiding over the matter. Instructions on how to make such a request are available on the Court's website at the [Here for You | Safe for You](#) page. All persons attending remotely must comply with applicable California Rules of Court, including Rule 1.150. There shall be no recording by anyone of the court proceeding, hearing or trial.

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NEW ORDER
2-2-2-2

"My top priority is to assure that we take whatever steps necessary to protect the safety and well-being of our justice partners, court users, staff, judicial officers, and others who must work in courthouses," Presiding Judge Brazile said. "Despite a General Order requiring the use of face masks and social distancing mandates, attorneys, litigants and others routinely remove their masks and fail to observe social distancing while in our courthouses. The Court finds that these new controls are necessary to maintain access to justice safely while balancing the right of public access to proceedings, freedom of the press and public health considerations during a pandemic."

To address concerns about lack of social distancing in some courthouse hallways and public areas, all attorneys, litigants, witnesses and authorized persons are prohibited from gathering with or speaking to anyone outside their household in courthouse hallways or public areas of the Court unless they can do so at least six feet apart from each other and while wearing masks over their nose and mouth.

To enforce social distancing, each court department shall schedule only the number of matters during each session as it can accommodate consistent with social distancing requirements in courtrooms and outside hallways of the courthouse.

Eating in courthouse hallways and courtrooms by the public shall be prohibited at all times.

Sheriff's Department personnel are directed to enforce the mandatory face mask requirement and social distancing protocols in courthouses (2020-GEN-016).

Since the resumption of court services on June 15 and phased resumption of hearings began on June 22 in all 38 courthouses, the Court:

- Equipped all 600 courtrooms across the county with remote courtroom appearance technology;
- Required masks (without valves) be worn over the nose and mouth inside courthouses, unless medically certified as an exception;
- Posted social distancing signs to limit the number of people allowed in hallways, courtrooms and elevators;
- Provided hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes in key traffic areas, and increased cleaning of restrooms and high-touch surfaces;
- Installed over 5,600 plexiglass barriers at security screening stations, public counters and courtrooms;
- Provided drop boxes outside each courthouse; and
- Required advance appointments for in-person service at the Clerk's Office and Self-Help Centers. Call centers at each courthouse are available to reserve appointments for in-person service and get answers to questions. Contact the call centers at this link:
<http://www.lacourt.org/newsmedia/ui/pdf/CALLCENTERPHONENUMBERSfinal.pdf>.

The Court is operating under its *Here For You | Safe For You* initiative to provide a safe courthouse environment while offering services that allow court business to be conducted remotely. Whether appearing by phone, from home, the office or coming to the courthouse, the Court provides safe, efficient options to access justice. The Court's remote courtroom appearance technology options promote social distancing by reducing the number of people appearing in person.

Information on *Here For You | Safe For You* can be found [here](#) and on the Court's Twitter page (@LASuperiorCourt).

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Superior Court of California
County of Los Angeles

NOV 23 2020

Sherri R. Carter, Executive Officer/Clerk
 By *Rizalinda Mina*, Deputy
Rizalinda Mina

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
 FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER OF THE
 PRESIDING JUDGE RE COVID-19
 PANDEMIC

GENERAL ORDER 2020-GEN-025-00

Since March 2020, when state and local public health officials issued stay-at-home orders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Court has endeavored to strike a balance between preserving access to justice and safeguarding the well-being of those who work in and use its courthouses. Initially, it continued cases pursuant to the authority the Chief Justice granted under Government Code section 68115 and limited operations to statutorily mandated, urgent or emergent matters. To operate trial courts safely during the pandemic, the Court implemented health and safety measures reviewed by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.

The Court began ramping up operations in June and July 2020. To reduce the number of people in its courthouses, it implemented technology to facilitate remote appearances, collaborated with justice agencies to implement multiple measures to decrease courthouse traffic, and authorized as many of its employees to telework as the work of the Court permitted.

The general orders the Court issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic prompted lawsuits from civil litigants seeking to have the Court adjudicate their cases. While some attorneys sought jury trials, other attorneys objected to coming into court during a pandemic.

Recently, despite mandatory and previous general orders¹ requiring the use of face masks and social distancing and ubiquitous signage in each courthouse reiterating the face mask and social

¹ See General Orders filed on [June 5, 2020](#), [July 6, 2020](#), and [October 13, 2020](#).

1 distancing mandates, attorneys, litigants, and others routinely remove their masks, wear their mask
2 improperly, and/or fail to observe social distancing while in courthouses. Non-compliance with the
3 basic protective measures that this Court has repeatedly required by way of prior general orders to
4 reduce the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus may increase COVID-19 infections.

5 On Sunday, November 22, 2020, Los Angeles County reported 2,718 new COVID-19
6 infections. The highest single-day infection rate of 4,522 that the County has experienced during the
7 pandemic occurred on Saturday, November 21, 2020. The five-day average for COVID-19 infections
8 in Los Angeles County is now 4,097. There were also 34 COVID-19 deaths on Saturday and another
9 nine (9) yesterday, adding to the grim total of 7,438 COVID-19 deaths in Los Angeles County.
10 Moreover, the seven-day testing positivity rate continues to rise alarmingly and now stands at 5.9%.
11 Due to the rise in the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which public health officials describe as
12 dangerous, the Court must take the following additional protective measures.

13 **THE COURT HEREBY FINDS AND ORDERS AS FOLLOWS:**

14 **Courthouse Access**

- 15 1. In the interest of enforcing social distancing and to reduce the number of people in
16 courthouses, access to courthouses is restricted at all times to judicial officers, court
17 staff, co-lessees, Judicial Council staff, vendors, jurors, mediators, authorized
18 persons (which includes, but is not limited to, news media representatives and news
19 reporters), attorneys, litigants and witnesses with matters on calendars, and
20 individuals with confirmed appointments.
- 21 2. In the interest of enforcing social distancing and reducing the number of people in
22 courthouses, effective Monday, November 30, 2020, members of the public, not
23 otherwise referenced above, who wish to attend a court proceeding may do so upon
24 advance request and at the discretion of the judicial officer presiding over the matter.
25 Instructions on how to make such a request will be available on the Court's website
26 at the [Here for You | Safe for You](#) page. All persons attending court proceedings,
27 whether in person or remotely, must comply with applicable California Rules of
28 Court, including Rule 1.150. There shall be no unauthorized recording of the court

1 proceeding, hearing or trial.

- 2 3. Attorneys, litigants, witnesses, and authorized persons are prohibited from gathering
- 3 with or speaking to anyone outside their household in courthouse hallways or other
- 4 public areas of the Court unless they can do so at least six feet apart from each other
- 5 and while wearing a mask over their nose and mouth.
- 6 4. To enforce social distancing, each court department shall schedule only the number
- 7 of matters during each session as it can accommodate consistent with social
- 8 distancing requirements in courtrooms and outside hallways of the courthouse.
- 9 5. Eating in courthouse hallways and courtrooms shall be prohibited at all times.
- 10 6. Sheriff's Department personnel are directed to enforce the General Order re Facial
- 11 Coverings and Social Distancing (2020-GEN-016).

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13 **THIS ORDER IS EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, EXCEPT FOR PARAGRAPH 2,**

14 **WHICH SHALL BE EFFECTIVE MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2020, AND THIS ENTIRE**

15 **ORDER SHALL REMAIN IN EFFECT UNTIL RESCINDED OR SUPERSEDED BY**

16 **ANOTHER GENERAL ORDER, AND MAY BE AMENDED AS CIRCUMSTANCES**

17 **REQUIRE.**

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21 DATED: November 23, 2020



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Kevin C. Brazile
 KEVIN C. BRAZILE
 Presiding Judge