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Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles

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PRESIDING JUDGE ERIC C. TAYLOR ANNOUNCES COURT MOURNS COVID-19 DEATHS OF TWO COURT EMPLOYEES THIS MONTH AND REMINDS ALL OF THE NEED TO ADHERE TO STATE, LOCAL AND THE COURT'S COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES

Presiding Judge Eric C. Taylor announced this evening the deaths of two members of the Court's family – a traffic clerk and a court interpreter – who died this month amid the COVID-19 surge in Los Angeles County.

"We are deeply saddened by the loss of two dedicated court employees during this devastating pandemic," Presiding Judge Taylor said. "We stand with the loved ones, friends and cherished co-workers who are grieving."

Presiding Judge Taylor added, "With these losses, we are reminded of the devastating nature of this pandemic and its impact on our County. We are the largest court in the nation, and are reminded that every one of us who is dedicated to justice is precious. And while we continue to implement extensive safety measures in all of our 38 courthouses, none of us is immune to this plague on our nation."

Throughout the pandemic, the Court has proactively protected its employees, judicial officers and everyone who comes through our doors by prioritizing public health and safety. For nearly a year, the Court has closely followed CDC and county public health guidance, prioritizing a broad range of public health and safety protocols. Significant resources have been dedicated to retrofit courtrooms, to purchase PPE supplies for the public and staff, to regularly sanitize its facilities, and to dramatically accelerate and expand remote audio and video access capabilities in all 600 courtrooms, Clerk's Office and self-help centers. Other measures have included calendar management tools to limit the number of cases heard during the day, revamping the juror system to reduce the

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size of prospective jurors in our courthouses, and requiring appointments for in-person service at our Clerk's Office and Self-Help. In consultation with county public health officials, the Court also has taken additional steps, such as mandating mask usage and social distancing in courthouses, installing plexiglass in more than 6,500 locations throughout the courthouses and courtrooms, adding signs to inform sick individuals not to enter, and more. All of these significant measures are detailed on our *Here For You | Safe For You* website page at this link:

<http://www.lacourt.org/newsmedia/ui/HfySfy.aspx>).

As public health guidance and legal requirements have changed, the Court has provided its workforce the fullest available protections. For example, the Court is in full compliance with AB 685 (effective January 1, 2021), that requires employers to send daily notice to employees of positive COVID-19 cases within the workplace. The Court always has notified identified close contacts, including justice partners and attorneys, of those individuals who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 or persons who tested positive. Presently, the Court's daily notice to employees and judicial officers provides **all** positive COVID-19 cases throughout the county court system, much beyond the statutory requirements. With regard to COVID-19 quarantine, it is the Court's policy and practice for employees exposed to COVID-19 to quarantine consistent with the guidance from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. When employees are quarantined, the Court provides FFCRA—and to further support employees' well-being—the decision was made to extend FFCRA for an additional three months beyond the January 1, 2021 expiration of those sick time benefits. It is the Court's policy that employees who exhibit symptoms, or have been exposed to others with symptoms, or who have tested positive, must quarantine.

Presiding Judge Taylor urged the public to be aware that inaccurate, insensitive and exploitative information often circulates on social media and emphasized the Court has endeavored to be transparent with the public, employees, judicial officers, justice partners, and elected officials about its *Here For You | Safe For You* public health and safety protections in its courthouses.

Court users and personnel are not immune to the increase in COVID-19 cases that Los Angeles County has experienced in the last 10 months and after the holidays. However, there is no indication that the recent COVID-19 surge has been exacerbated within the courts.

Presiding Judge Taylor added, "We remain committed to prioritizing public health and safety and providing safe access to justice for so many people in need as we endure this pandemic."

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