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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **PRESIDING JUDGE ERIC C. TAYLOR ANNOUNCES NEW CIVIL JURY TRIAL RAMP-UP PLAN TO PRESERVE JURORS, PROMOTE SOCIAL DISTANCING**

Effective immediately, Department 1 at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse, 111 N. Hill St., Los Angeles, will serve as the central location for county-wide coordination of all Civil jury trials, Presiding Judge Eric C. Taylor announced today.

"These new coordinated procedures seek to ensure that courthouses, as well as hallways within our courthouses, do not become overcrowded," Presiding Judge Taylor said. "A Civil courtroom may be next door to a courtroom holding a Criminal trial – and therefore we need to carefully regulate the scheduling of jury trials consistent with social distancing. The Court has a limited number of courtrooms large enough to accommodate jury trials and we need to assess the availability of jurors. Given these complexities, I have designated Department 1 as the central place to make these assessments, allowing the Court to gradually provide Civil attorneys and litigants the access to justice they need to resolve their cases safely and efficiently."

The gradual resumption of Civil trials takes into consideration these factors:

- Statutory priority is given to the trial of Criminal cases.
- There are uncertainties of juror availability.
- The Court's goal to ensure that courthouses, as well as hallways within courthouses, do not become overcrowded.

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## **CIVIL JURY TRIALS**

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- The availability of Civil courtrooms large enough to hold jury trials consistent with social distancing requirements.

Earlier this year, Presiding Judge Taylor created a Special Civil Jury Trial Committee chaired by Judge David J. Cowan, and appointed several experienced and respected bench officers as committee members. Based on the committee's recommendations, Presiding Judge Taylor announced the following factors each judge must address before a Civil case is ready for trial courtroom determination and before calling for jurors:

- A Mandatory Settlement Conference (MSC) or mediation must have been held within the last 90 days. If there has not been one within that period, Department 1 will arrange for an MSC with an available judge if requested. Alternatively, parties may elect to meet with a private mediator.
- Whether the parties agree to a jury of fewer than 12 persons, which would allow the trial to proceed in the assigned department.
- Whether the parties agree to a bench trial of some or all the issues, which may avoid a jury trial altogether.
- Whether any witnesses can testify remotely, which would help to reduce the number of people in the courtroom.

When a judge determines a case is ready for trial, that judge will submit a request to go forward with the new Civil Jury Trial form. The form will include information such as the number of people who will be in the courtroom, when the court and counsel wish to begin trial, and whether the case is entitled to preference, nearing the five-year statute of limitations, or involves special circumstances otherwise warranting consideration for priority. The Court has established procedures for trial judges to submit the Civil Jury Trial form depending on where the case is assigned. Counsel may provide input to the assigned judge in completing the form.

"I want to thank the Civil bar and litigants for their patience as we implement our responsible resumption of Civil jury trials in the wake of the winter COVID-19 surge and understanding the need to carefully regulate and prioritize which Civil jury trials are ready to proceed," Presiding Judge Taylor said. "We will all work together, recognizing our duty to more fully address the needs of our communities through the safe and deliberate expansion of access to justice for Angelenos who rely on the Court to resolve their disputes fairly and impartially."

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