

April 3, 2020

Justices, Judges, Circuit Court Clerks and Kentucky Court of Justice Personnel:

It was four weeks ago today that we got word of the first COVID-19 case in Kentucky and our lives changed overnight. In just one month, we've moved from an operations model that depends heavily on face-to-face interactions to one that relies almost completely on remote communications. I couldn't be more impressed with your ability to adapt during this time of rapid change.

As COVID-19 cases surged in Kentucky and across the country, we took steps to enforce more stringent social distancing. This week the Supreme Court moved quickly to:

- Suspend in-person services at court facilities, allow all attorneys and parties to participate remotely in court proceedings, and observe federal and state moratoriums on evictions, all through May 1.
- Extend the 50/50 staffing schedule for the offices of circuit and appellate clerks through May 1. This rotating work schedule is designed to protect the court clerks and their deputies who have more in-person contact with the public than nearly anyone in the court system.
- Give attorneys more time to complete continuing legal education for the 2019-2020 educational year as live CLE programming becomes limited due to the pandemic.

Some good news this week is that our county jail populations are down 36% since March 12. I appreciate all of your efforts to work with local officials to safely reduce inmate populations. With confined spaces and a large number of inmates, our jails are susceptible to devastating outbreaks of COVID-19. We've started seeing reports of COVID-19 among jail populations in other states and are hopeful we can avoid a similar situation in Kentucky.

In other news, we're now able to take stock of our budget for next year as the House and Senate concurred on changes this week and the Judicial Branch [budget bill](#) is ready to be signed by the governor. The 2020 General Assembly passed a one-year (instead of two-year) budget in light of declining revenues due to the pandemic and our budget for Fiscal Year 2021 is better than we had anticipated.

Thank you for your continued patience and cooperation during this time. I wish you all a safe and restful weekend.



John D. Minton, Jr.
Chief Justice of Kentucky
Capitol Building
700 Capital Avenue, Room 231
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
Telephone 502.564.4162

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