

**STANDING ORDER
TWENTY-FOURTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
SAMUEL W. JUNKIN
PRESIDING CIRCUIT JUDGE**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and pursuant §12-17-24 of Code of Alabama (1975) and Alabama Supreme Court Order dated March 12, 2020,

It is hereby **ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED** as follows:

All state courts of the 24th Judicial Circuit are open and will remain open under all circumstances, subject to the provisions of this order.

All in-person proceedings in all state courts in the 24th Judicial Circuit, including but not limited to circuit, district, probate, domestic relations, juvenile, child support, traffic, small claims, early warning, and trial courts are hereby suspended from the close of business on Friday, March 13, 2020 through Friday, March 20, 2020, subject to the exceptions below.

Exceptions to this suspension of in-person court proceedings include, but are not limited to:

- Proceedings necessary to protect constitutional rights of criminal defendants, including bond-related matters and plea agreements for incarcerated individuals
- Proceedings related to relief from abuse, including but not limited to orders of protection
- Proceedings related to emergency child custody orders
- Department of Children's Services emergency matters related to child protection
- Proceedings related to petitions for temporary injunctive relief
- Proceedings related to emergency mental health orders
- Proceedings related to emergency protection of elderly or vulnerable persons
- Proceedings directly related to the COVID-19 public health emergency
- Other exceptions as approved by the presiding circuit judge

The circuit judge and the district judge in each county are authorized to determine the manner in which in-person court proceedings for the exceptions listed above are to be conducted. Other exceptions to the suspension of in-person court proceedings must be approved by the Presiding Circuit Judge. Any permitted in-court proceedings shall be limited to attorneys, parties, witnesses, security officers, and other necessary persons, as determined by the trial judge.

Judges are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that core constitutional functions and rights are protected. Additionally, court clerks are charged with ensuring that court functions continue. Nothing in this Order should be construed as closing the Circuit Clerk's office, all court offices shall remain open. Nevertheless, all judges and court clerks are urged to limit in-person courtroom contact as much as possible by utilizing available technologies, including alternative means of filing, teleconferencing, email, and video conferencing.

If it becomes necessary to close judges' offices or court clerks' offices during the period of suspension, these offices shall remain accessible by telephone and email to the extent possible during their regular business hours. If available, drop boxes should be used for conventionally filed documents.

This order expressly does not prohibit court proceedings by telephone, video, teleconferencing, email, or other means that do not involve in-person contact. This order does not affect courts' consideration of matters that can be resolved without in-person proceedings.

This order is intended to be interpreted broadly for protection of the public from risks associated with COVID-19.

Done this the 13th day of March, 2020.

/s/ SAMUEL W. JUNKIN
Samuel W. Junkin
Circuit Judge, Presiding
24th Judicial Circuit