

CLIENT ALERT

COVID and the Courts: Federal Court Restrictions and Closures – An Update

March 23, 2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to expand its geographic reach, courts across the country have begun to impose a number of restrictions, closures, and other emergency measures. Currently, however, these measures are being implemented by federal courts on an *ad hoc*, court-by-court basis, leaving litigants with a patchwork of sometimes inconsistent rules for accessing court services. These restrictions vary from modest restrictions on court access to high-risk individuals, to near total suspension of court activities. As of the time of this alert, for example:

- The Middle District of Florida has restricted physical access to court facilities by individuals showing symptoms of COVID-19, and individuals with a high-possibility of exposure to COVID-19.
- In addition to restricting physical access to high-risk individuals, the Northern District of New York has postponed civil and criminal jury selection and trials scheduled to commence between March 13, 2020 and April 30, 2020, with motion hearings to continue without oral argument or by phone or video conference.
- The District Court for the District of Columbia and the Central District of California have suspended all jury trials and civil motion hearings (including by telephone) unless specifically ordered by the judge presiding over the matter – in the case of the District Court for the District of Columbia beginning March 17, 2020 through April 17, 2020, and in the case of the Central District of California, beginning March 23, 2020 through May 1, 2020.

In an effort to help litigants navigate this patchwork of court restrictions, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts has prepared the [“Court Orders and Updates During COVID-19 Pandemic” website](#) with links to relevant orders from every Circuit Court of Appeals, District Court, and Bankruptcy Court in the United States, which is being updated twice per day. If you have business before any federal Court of Appeals, District Court, or Bankruptcy Court, during this time of crisis, we strongly recommend using this resource to keep up-to-date on how the constantly-shifting landscape of emergency court responses could impact your litigation.

We also encourage you to visit Crowell & Moring’s [Coronavirus Resource Center](#) for the latest information from our multidisciplinary working group to help clients navigate the rapidly evolving business, legal and operational challenges associated with the COVID-19 outbreak.

For more information, please contact the professional(s) listed below, or your regular Crowell & Moring contact.

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