Superior Court of California

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, June 5, 2020

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: Superior Court of Alameda County resumes jury trials.

The Superior Court of Alameda County (Court) announced today that it will resume civil and criminal jury trials, starting June 8, 2020, with jurors first being summonsed to report for new trials on June 29, 2020.

On April 29, 2020, Hon. Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye, Chief Justice of California and Chair of the Judicial Council, issued a Statewide Order extending the speedy trial deadline for criminal jury trials in California through June 15, 2020. During this time, the Court also suspended its civil jury trials, as permitted under Emergency Rule 6, adopted by the Judicial Council of California on April 6, 2020.

Whether criminal or civil in nature, jury trials are the cornerstone of our justice system. But promoting the general welfare of our residents is a foundational purpose of the U.S. Constitution; that means keeping people safe. To balance these interests, starting June 8, 2020, the Court will resume certain criminal and civil jury trials that were suspended per the Court's March 17 court closure. Then, starting June 29, the Court will begin summonsing prospective jurors for new trials.

However, given the status of the COVID-19 crisis in Alameda County, which includes ongoing shelter-in-place orders and the need to maintain social distancing and control crowd sizes, the Court recognizes that it can safely conduct only a limited number of jury trials simultaneously. As such, the Court requested authority from the Chief Justice to further extend by 30 days the "speedy trial" deadline for criminal cases that would otherwise need to be brought to trial on or before July 15, 2020. The Chief Justice granted the Court's request via Emergency Order issued on May 29, 2020.

In order to promote the health and welfare of all involved in the trial process, the Court is implementing numerous additional safety measures, including:

- Requiring all persons entering a courthouse to wear a mask or face covering at all times and undergo a health screening, which may include a temperature check;
- Enforcing social distancing standards, including limiting elevator, restroom, courtroom, and assembly area capacities;

- Staggering juror reporting times to limit attendance numbers;
- Reconfiguring jury assembly rooms and courtrooms to limit capacity and ensure social distancing through the use of designated seating spaces;
- Cleaning and sanitizing jury assembly rooms and restrooms—particularly door handles and other high-touch surfaces—before the arrival of each jury panel; and
- Making hand sanitizer available in public spaces within the courthouses.

In addition to these physical safety measures, the Court is modifying its jury selection process in order to reduce the number of jurors called to each courthouse and to shorten the time jurors spend assembled together for verbal *voir dire* or questioning. To make this happen, the Court's Judicial Executive Committee adopted two new emergency Local Rules, rule 1.10 and 1.10a. Rule 1.10 clarifies that jurors will be selected countywide for all trials in order to ensure that a representative cross-section of our community is able to appear. Rule 1.10a then provides for the advance, remote completion of juror questionnaires, including hardship deferral requests.

Where possible, the Court strongly encourages all prospective jurors to complete these questionnaires in advance, by no later than 4:00 p.m. on the Tuesday before their reporting date. Doing so will expedite the in-person jury selection process and, if appropriate under the law, may result in a juror being excused without having to report to the courthouse in person. The Court has updated its jury web page to detail this streamlined jury process and has also written a linked letter to jurors detailing our courthouse safety measures summarized above.

As the Court noted during Juror Appreciation Week in May, jury service is a core obligation of citizenship; the Court greatly appreciates the willingness of the public to serve and help ensure the jury rights of litigants, even in difficult times such as these. As jury trials resume in Alameda County, the Court will continue to do everything in its power to balance the need to protect those rights with the need to provide a safe and healthy environment for our jurors. Please continue to check the Court's COVID-19 web page for additional information regarding the Court's COVID-related modifications. To our jurors and prospective jurors, we thank you for your service.