

Judge Kevin Brazile was responsible for LA courts during the pandemic.

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Kevin C. Brazile

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LOS ANGELES — It was March 13, 2020 when Los Angeles County Presiding Judge Kevin Brazile ordered all jury trials continued in the nation's largest court system. He didn't know then, but it was the first of many decisions he'd have to make regarding limiting, delaying, changing and restoring court operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I've never had to do so many news releases in my life," Brazile recalled.

For most of the past decade, he's been involved in the Los Angeles County Superior Court's management.

In January, he stepped out of his role as presiding judge and returned to an independent civil calendar.

"This is what I did before I got into court leadership," Brazile said. "So it's kind of nice to be back. Our court's in good hands with our current P.J.," he said, referring to his friend, Presiding Judge Eric Taylor.

The battle between ensuring the public's and court workers' safety while preserving some access to the justice system consumed half of Brazile's tenure.

"About 80% of the court was shut down. So, those judges, we would send them work that they could do at home," said Brazile, who directed which courtrooms would close. He kept operations to the barest of essentials: such as temporary restraining orders, arraignments, search warrants and other facets of criminal justice, which are constitutionally given priority.

Civil matters, however, were at a virtual standstill for most of the year. The decision triggered one of the first legal actions against Brazile's decisions.