

MET NEWS

LOS ANGELES SUPERIOR COURT

Court Closed for Three Days

Los Angeles Superior Court Presiding Judge Kevin Brazile announced late yesterday in an email to bench officers:

Hello, everyone. First and foremost, I want to thank you all for your understanding, patience and commitment to service and for all you have done since this COVID-19 virus presented in the United States generally, and in Los Angeles County specifically.

By the end of today, Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye should authorize me to take emergency measures to protect the public, court users, our staff, and ourselves. Pursuant in part to that authority, I am hereby announcing a court closure, of each and every courthouse in our County, effective tomorrow, March 17, 2020. These courthouse closures will be for three (3) days, from March 17-19, 2020. Pursuant to the Emergency Powers from the Chief, the three (3) days of closure shall constitute court holidays for purposes of calculating statutory time. Once again, our courthouses will be closed to the public on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, March 17-19, 2020, and will reopen on Friday, March 20, 2020.

I wish to thank you for your excellent calendar management over the last week or so, and especially today. Generally, cases should be continued for 30 days or longer, whenever possible. Optimally, I ask that you continue matters beyond 60 days to minimize case congestion on your calendars. Going forward, for cases that must be set on a shorter schedule, please follow the direction provided by the Supervising Judge of your discipline. Your District Supervising Judges will continue to serve as your primary point of contact during this time, which is expected to last at least 30 days.

As a reminder, the Governor has asked that persons 65 and over and persons pregnant or experiencing underlying health conditions remain in self-isolation. We ask that you consider heeding the Governor's recommendation, especially if you are over 65. We want to err on the side of caution. Everyone else is expected to return to work on Friday, March 20, 2020, unless notified otherwise.

By Friday, March 20, 2020, we will provide further direction concerning the potential of further court closures, scaling down of our trial court operations and other measures we will take pursuant to the emergency authority the Chief will provide me.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our mission of ensuring access to justice, even in these uncertain times. Take very good care everyone and stay safe.

Brazile on Saturday sent an advisory to all bench officers. It appears below in major part.

Hello everyone, there have been many swift COVID-related developments over the past few days with declarations of emergency being declared by the Governor, City of Los

Angeles Mayor, and just this past Friday President Donald Trump declared a national emergency for the COVID-19 virus. With the help of the COVID-19 Working Group and most importantly all of you, we are implementing and announcing a series of social distancing measures to protect jurors, judicial officers, employees, attorneys and the public that will be effective Monday, March 16, 2020.

Now that COVID-19 is spreading in our communities, Los Angeles County and state public health officials are recommending the important strategy of social distancing to stop or slow the spread of the virus. It requires the creation of about six (6) feet of physical space between individuals. They emphasize the need to minimize the number of gatherings as much as possible to achieve space between individuals when events or activities cannot be modified, postponed, or canceled. Additionally, there is the immediate need to create space between individuals who come together on a one-time or rare basis and who have very different travel patterns such as those coming from multiple countries, states or counties.

Therefore, effective Monday, March 16, 2020, the following measures will be implemented:

- No new jurors will be summoned for any civil or criminal jury trials for the next 30 days;
- The trial judge for any jury trial in session may exercise his or her discretion to either continue the trial or declare a mistrial;
- The trial judge for any non-jury trial in session may exercise his or her discretion to either continue the trial or declare a mistrial;
- Self-help centers will be closed with the exception of assistance with restraining order preparation;
- Judges should consider ways to achieve social distancing in their courtrooms by offering telephonic appearances and other strategies to reduce courtroom traffic; and
- If you do not presently offer telephonic appearances but would like to offer that option, please send an email to your Supervising Judge. This process will take a few days to implement.

[Executive Officer] Sherri [Carter] and the Human Resources on Friday announced policies to provide high-risk individuals with chronic medical conditions and employees impacted by school, child care, or elder care closures options to telework, perform shift work or use leave. We will be very liberal with supporting our employees so please be flexible and patient.

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Daily Journal

State Bar closes offices, court allows some telephonic appearances

The agency's announcement came as a response to the novel coronavirus, but it also opens up questions about the future of the bar and allowing technology to play a bigger role than it does today, two leading attorneys said.

Starting today, the State Bar is closing its Los Angeles and San Francisco offices to the public, according to an internal email. The measure comes as a response to the novel coronavirus.

All staff have been asked to telecommute. To ensure some essential functions will go on as usual, staff will be rotated to limit the number of people present at any given time.

The actions are among several taken in light of the virus. One of those measures will now allow parties to phone in during State Bar Court proceedings, except for trials.

The agency's announcement opens up questions about the future of the bar and allowing technology to play a bigger role than it does today, two leading attorneys said.

Parties that have symptoms associated with the virus or who are feeling ill are asked to stay home. However, parties must still appear in person for trial, Friday's notice said.

Heather Rosing, attorney with Klinedinst PC and former president of the California Lawyers Association, said the change is a big deal since it hasn't been allowed before. The action is in line with what other courts across the state have done.