

To the members of the Orange and Osceola County Communities:

As the Ninth Judicial Circuit continues to navigate the impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) on the courts, I want to assure you that the health, wellbeing and safety of the community is our utmost priority. These are challenging times, and unprecedented measures are being taken across the nation to minimize risk and safeguard health.

Unprecedented measures are being taken at the Ninth Circuit as well. Limiting operations at courthouses, shifting to electronic hearings, suspending jury trials – these are uncharted times for the Circuit. Essential services remain uninterrupted, although many are now being handled through electronic means. However, the majority of other services and hearings will move to remote technological platforms (videoconference or teleconference) in order to eliminate the need for people to gather or come in and out of the courthouse. We have canceled all activities outside the core functions of the court. Group meetings, group tours, workshops, luncheons and ceremonies have all been canceled. Inside the Courts – our four-week community outreach program – has been postponed until later this year. It is our hope that striking this balance helps flatten the curve of the progression of the virus and contributes to the collective efforts to keep our community safe.

We recognize that minimizing and shifting court operations in this way will have a tremendous impact on our court users, and will result in unforeseen and unintended consequences. We are working hard to mitigate this impact and to make these transitions as quickly as possible. Court operations are layered and complex – and transitioning these complex systems to remote platforms will take time. Thank you for your patience and cooperation as we face each new challenge of addressing the impact of COVID-19 on the Courts. Thank you too for your assistance as we move to forge new paths and flesh out the details for operations going forward.

We appreciate your support, and thank you for working with us to ensure the wellbeing of our community. With so many moving parts, I encourage you to visit our judges' individual pages on the Circuit's website – www.ninthcircuit.org -- for updates to division instructions and procedures. I also encourage you to follow us on Facebook or Twitter (@NinthCircuitFL) for quick and timely updates.

Donald A. Myers, Jr.
Chief Judge, Ninth Judicial Circuit