

Coronavirus: The Latest Court Closures And Restrictions

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Law360 (March 12, 2020, 11:19 PM EDT) -- As courts across the country take measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, some are restricting access and altering their procedures. Here is a roundup of changes.

This list will be updated continually with new information.

Federal Appeals Courts

[U.S. Supreme Court](#)

While the U.S. Supreme Court [closed to tourists](#) Thursday until further notice, the building will remain open for official business. The court did not provide an update about contingency planning for a two-week oral argument session scheduled to begin March 23.

Federal Circuit Court of Appeals

The [U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit](#) said Thursday that some cases scheduled for the April 2020 sitting are being removed from the argument calendar and will be submitted on the briefs.

For cases still on the calendar, the court said that if counsel for either party is located outside the Washington, D.C., area, the argument will be

conducted by telephone conference at the same date and time it was originally scheduled. For cases involving all-local counsel, the court plans to proceed with in-person argument as previously scheduled, noting that parties in all cases will be notified individually on how the court plans to proceed in their case.

D.C. Court of Appeals

The Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit is limiting access to its courthouse to "judges, court staff, members of the media, and visitors with official business with the courts," effective Friday.

The court asked that those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19, have had contact with someone who has been diagnosed, been asked to self-quarantine or are experiencing flu-like symptoms not enter the courthouse.

[Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals](#)

The Ninth Circuit has canceled its en banc hearings and all noncase-related meetings scheduled for the week of March 9. At the discretion of the three-judge panels, there may be additional cancellations the following week as well.

All scheduled oral argument hearings in all locations will proceed unless an order is issued otherwise in a specific case, the court said. Those who wish to appear remotely for any hearing may file a motion to do so.

Federal District Courts and State Courts

Arizona

The District of Arizona is asking those who recently traveled from an area

with widespread COVID-19 — and those who are exhibiting symptoms of the virus — not to visit its courthouse.

California

The Central District of California is urging those required to appear in court, including jurors, to contact the court before appearing if they are experiencing any flu-like symptoms. The court said it will make reasonable accommodations and reschedule proceedings as needed.

The Eastern District of California is prohibiting anyone who visited China, South Korea, Japan, Italy or Iran in the past two weeks from visiting any district courthouse. The restriction also applies to those who have had close contact with someone who has visited those countries in the past two weeks, those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed, those who have been asked to self-quarantine and those experiencing fever, cough or shortness of breath.

The Northern District of California is urging anyone with symptoms of the virus not to appear in court. The district said individual judges may change their courtroom procedures or provide accommodations where appropriate.

The Southern District of California said there are currently no changes to normal court operations, but urged anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms, coughing, sneezing or fever to contact the court before appearing.

Connecticut

The District of Connecticut said Wednesday that all civil and criminal jury trials and jury selections scheduled to start before April 10 are postponed until further notice. The courthouses will remain open for all other business.

The court is also prohibiting visitors who have been to China, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Iran, or any locale that is quarantined in the past two weeks. The court specified that those who have visited New Rochelle, New York — other than in a car or train — are also prohibited from visiting courthouses and probation offices.

Delaware

For the district and bankruptcy courts, court personnel and attorneys are advised to stay home if they're feeling ill and to practice good cold and flu hygiene measures.

Attorneys are asked to inform the appropriate court if they have appeared in court and have since developed symptoms or tested positive for the coronavirus and to inform the courts about any scheduled proceedings that will require the attendance of a person who has tested positive for coronavirus or has been in contact in the past 14 days with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus.

Also, the courts will conduct conferences and hearings by phone when possible and will consider any request to change a scheduled in-person proceeding to a telephone proceeding.

For state courts, proceedings will be conducted by telephone when possible and the court will consider all requests for in-person hearings to be conducted by phone. Attorneys and self-represented parties scheduled for trial must notify the court if the trial will require the attendance of a person who has tested positive for coronavirus or has been in contact in the past 14 days with a person who has tested positive for coronavirus.

Florida

For the Florida Southern District Court, court security officers are screening people who enter the federal courthouse and denying entry to anyone who has recently visited Italy, Iran, South Korea or China. Anyone who resides with or has had recent close contact with someone who has traveled to one of those countries, has been asked to self-quarantine, has been diagnosed with or had contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 also will not be able to enter any of the federal courthouses in the district.

On the state side, courts will implement procedures like social distancing, sanitary precautions and conducting business remotely. The courts have emergency protocols that were last updated and implemented during the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic.

Georgia

The Northern District of Georgia said Wednesday it is denying entry to anyone who has visited China, South Korea, Japan, Italy or Iran in the past two weeks. The restriction also applies to those who have had close contact with someone who has visited those countries in the past 14 days, been diagnosed with COVID-19, been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed or been asked to self-quarantine by any hospital or health agency. Those denied entry may appear by teleconference with approval of the presiding judge.

The [Georgia Supreme Court](#) on Thursday asked all attorneys, parties and other visitors to stay away from the court if they have a fever or symptoms of respiratory illness or if they have been exposed to anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 or the flu.

Hawaii

The District of Hawaii is prohibiting those who have visited China, Iran, Italy, Japan and South Korea within the past two weeks from entering the courthouse, as well as those who have had contact with someone who has been in those countries, been diagnosed with COVID-19, been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed or have been asked to self-quarantine.

Illinois

The Northern District of Illinois said Thursday that all civil jury trials and jury selections scheduled to start before April 3 are postponed until further notice. Second chance reentry court proceedings, veterans treatment court proceedings and nontelephone settlement conferences scheduled before April 3 are also postponed. The courthouses will remain open for all other business, including criminal case proceedings, and grand juries will continue to meet.

The court suspended all mass public gatherings outside of court proceedings at the federal courthouses in Chicago and Rockford, Illinois, and limited deliveries to the court. Judges are encouraged to conduct proceedings by phone or video conference where practicable.

Iowa

The Iowa Supreme Court ordered that attorneys and parties notify their opposing counsel and appropriate clerk of court's office if they suspect a participant in any proceeding has an elevated risk of transmitting the novel coronavirus. No one who has an elevated risk can attend any state court proceeding in person without court authorization. Attorneys must also ask their clients and witnesses whether they have an elevated risk of transmission, the order said.

Potential state court jurors must notify the jury manager if they have an elevated risk of transmitting coronavirus, and the jury manager must reschedule them to a new service term. The court said it will also promptly consider requests from parties to change in-person proceedings to remote proceedings.

Maryland

The District of Maryland is prohibiting those who have visited China, Iran, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Egypt, Washington State and New Rochelle, New York, within the past two weeks from entering the courthouse, as well as those who have had contact with someone who has been in those areas, been diagnosed with COVID-19, been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed or have been asked to self-quarantine.

Massachusetts

The Massachusetts District Court announced that while the courthouses in Boston, Worcester and Springfield will remain open, all jury trials scheduled to begin before April 27 are postponed until further notice.

The court said that while trial-specific deadlines before April 27 in criminal cases are also postponed, judges can delay trial-specific deadlines for civil cases at their own discretion. Individual judges can continue to hold hearings, conferences and bench trials if they want, but the court is encouraging them to do so by telephone or video conference.

Criminal matters before magistrate judges will continue as usual, and grand juries will continue to meet until further notice, the court said. The clerk's office, probation agency and bankruptcy court will also remain open until further notice.

The court is also prohibiting visitors who recently traveled to China, Italy, Japan, Iran and South Korea from entering any courthouse or probation office in the district. Those who have had close contact with someone who visited those countries — as well as those who have symptoms of COVID-19, have been diagnosed with the virus, or have been instructed by a doctor to self-quarantine — are also prohibited from visiting.

Michigan

The Eastern District of Michigan is prohibiting people who have visited China, South Korea, Italy and Iran in the last two weeks from entering any district courthouse until further notice.

The district is also prohibiting: those who have had close contact with someone who has visited those four countries, have recently traveled to U.S. areas with widespread community transmission of COVID-19, have been asked to self-quarantine, have been diagnosed with the virus or who exhibit the symptoms of the virus.

Minnesota

The District of Minnesota is prohibiting those who have visited China, Iran, Italy and South Korea within the past two weeks from entering the courthouse, as well as those who have had contact with someone who has been in those countries, been diagnosed with COVID-19, been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed or been asked to self-quarantine.

Nebraska

The District of Nebraska has ordered that those who have recently visited China, South Korea, Japan, Italy or Iran should not attend in-person proceedings without court authorization.

The restriction also applies to those who have had contact with someone who has been in those countries, been diagnosed with COVID-19, been in contact with someone who has been diagnosed, been asked to self-quarantine or exhibit symptoms of an infectious respiratory illness.

New Jersey

For the New Jersey District Court, access is restricted for anyone who has been diagnosed with coronavirus, been asked to self-quarantine, been possibly exposed to coronavirus through contact with someone in quarantine and/or has traveled to or had contact with anyone who has traveled to countries hit hardest by the pandemic within the past 14 days. Those countries are China, South Korea, Japan, Italy and Iran.

Any impacted attorneys scheduled to appear in court before a judge should contact that chamber directly.

For New Jersey state courts, new jury trials are suspended until further notice, although all trials currently underway will proceed.

Schedules for nonjury proceedings such as landlord-tenant and small claims hearings will be staggered to prevent large groups of people gathering in a confined area. The judiciary is also preparing to conduct other proceedings, along with conferences and committee meetings, remotely. Out-of-state travel has been suspended for staffers, and nonessential court events like student tours have been canceled.

New York

The Eastern District of New York is prohibiting those who have traveled to China, Italy, Iran, Japan or South Korea in the past two weeks. Eastern District Chief Judge Roslynn R. Mauskopf said in an administrative order

that the list of countries may be updated as further guidance is received.

The Southern District of New York is prohibiting those who have visited those countries, as well as a slew of European countries, according to signs posted at courthouse entrances Thursday. The countries are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Malta, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Vatican City, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Monaco, San Marino and Spain.

Prohibited in both districts are people who have come into close contact with anyone who has traveled to China, Italy, Iran, Japan or South Korea within the past two weeks, have been asked to self-quarantine, been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have come into contact with someone who has been diagnosed.

The Southern District is also barring those with a fever, cough or shortness of breath, and the executive office in that district will not be issuing new attorney service passes until further notice.

In bankruptcy court, debtors with Chapter 13 cases before Chief Judge Cecelia G. Morris and Judge Sean H. Lane are waived from in-person court appearances. Attorneys and unrepresented debtors who are showing signs of illness must adjourn their cases. The contact for Judge Morris is Vanessa Ashmeade, (845) 451-6367. The contact for Judge Lane is Arturo Tavarez at (914) 467-7094.

New York state [announced Wednesday](#) that it is prohibiting anyone who has traveled to China, South Korea, Japan, Italy or Iran in the past 14 days from its 350 state-run courthouses.

Also banned from state courts are people who live with or have come into close contact with anyone who has been in one of those countries during that period, been asked to self-quarantine, and those who have either been diagnosed with COVID-19 or come into contact with someone who has been diagnosed.

The U.S. Court of International Trade in Manhattan is prohibiting entry to those who have visited China, Italy, Iran or South Korea in the past two weeks, as well as those who have been asked to self-quarantine. The restriction also applies to those who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or have come into close contact with someone who has been diagnosed. The court is allowing teleconferencing and video conferencing with the approval of a presiding judge.

Pennsylvania

For Pennsylvania state courts, oral arguments scheduled for March 17 through March 19 in the Widener Building, 1325-1385 S Penn Square, in Philadelphia will be rescheduled for March 24 through March 26 at the Pennsylvania Judicial Center, 601 Commonwealth Ave., #1500, in Harrisburg.

Rhode Island

Those who are required to appear in Rhode Island's district court, including those who are called as jurors, must contact the court before appearing if they are experiencing any flu-like symptoms.

Texas

The Southern District of Texas [said Thursday](#) that it is suspending all jury trials until April 1. The federal courthouse in Houston will remain open for

other matters, including matters scheduled for hearing in bankruptcy court, the district said.

In the Eastern District Court, attorneys and parties were ordered to communicate if court proceedings could cause someone to come into contact with an individual exposed to or infected with the virus.

On the state side, the [Texas Supreme Court](#) issued guidance Thursday calling on courts to suspend proceedings or schedule them to avoid gatherings of large groups of people until at least April 1, including jury trials and large docket calls. It is encouraging courts to implement remote appearances by phone or video for all proceedings that may occur remotely.

The Harris County Civil District Court, serving the Houston area, has [suspended civil jury trials](#) for the rest of March and has suspended criminal jury trials through March 20.

Dallas County has canceled all jury trials at the George Allen Civil Courthouse and all Justice of the Peace Courts until April 13. Dallas County residents who are summoned for jury service before April 13 should not report and do not need to call to reschedule their service.

Collin County District Courts are rescheduling all nonessential court matters from March 16 to April 1. All in-person hearings and trials will be rescheduled during this time, unless designated as "essential," a list that includes temporary restraining orders, temporary injunctions and any suits or hearings with jurisdictional deadlines. Attorneys must contact each court regarding each setting. No uncontested matters will be heard. The courts are developing a plan for electronic appearances.

Virginia

The Eastern District of Virginia has postponed all naturalization ceremonies for the remainder of March and has suspended all noncase-related events, tours and other gatherings in the courthouses.

All misdemeanor, traffic and petty offense dockets from March 10 through April 30 are also postponed, the court said.

Washington

The Western District of Washington has postponed all civil and criminal matters scheduled for an in-person hearing before any district or magistrate judge in the Seattle or Tacoma courthouses until further notice. All grand jury proceedings are also postponed.

The court said case-by-case exceptions for nonjury matters may be given at the district's discretion.

The Snohomish County Superior Court has postponed all criminal jury trials until at least April 24. All civil jury trials are postponed until at least June 1. The court is barring anyone showing signs of illness from its courtrooms and program offices. The court is also capping the number of cases that will be confirmed on any court commissioner calendar at 10.

The King County Superior Court has postponed all jury trials until April 24, according to local news reports as of the evening of March 13. The court is encouraging appearances via telephone for hearings.

Pierce County Courts and Tacoma Municipal Courts have suspended all jury trials through April 24, except those already in progress. Bench trials will

remain an option, and nonjury trials are not affected. Those scheduled to appear for a criminal proceeding between March 16 and April 24 must still show up to court.

U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

All examiner and examining attorney interviews, Patent Trial and Appeal Board and Trademark Trial and Appeal Board oral hearings and other similar in-person meetings scheduled to take place at [USPTO](#) offices on or after March 13 will be conducted remotely by video or telephone until further notice.

International Courts

European Court of Justice & General Court of the [European Union](#)

Both the ECJ and the General Court have partially closed their doors. The courts will hear only urgent matters until further notice. All other cases already scheduled until March 27 at the ECJ and April 3 at the General Court will be heard at a later date. The filing deadlines for all cases will not change. The ECJ has also advised staff not to go into the court buildings from March 16 to 27 unless it is necessary for a specific case.

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