



**Office of the Chief Judge  
15th Judicial Circuit  
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***FIFTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF ILLINOIS***

***PRESS RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
MARCH 15, 2020***

Chief Judge Robert T. Hanson announced that the courts systems in Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle and Stephenson Counties are taking additional action in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Judges of the 15<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit have been monitoring and responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is an evolving situation with daily, if not hourly, changes. The Illinois Supreme Court recommends that courts follow the CDC's directives to avoid large gatherings and practice "social distancing".

The Illinois Supreme Court has advised all courts that non-essential in-person court proceedings may pose a risk to participants, court staff, or the public. Courts may avoid risk by rescheduling court events to a later date, especially jury trials and large docket calls, or alternatively, by holding proceedings via telephone or video remote appearance where possible.

Furthermore, essential proceedings, such as criminal proceedings, juvenile temporary custody hearings, temporary restraining orders/temporary injunctions, juvenile detention hearings, family violence protective orders, and certain mental health proceedings, shall occur in a manner consistent with the policy of mitigating the impact of COVID-19. While keeping the courts available to the fullest extent, all proceedings must be consistent with public safety as well as any future policy directives from the Supreme Court and the local chief judge, as well as federal, state and local public health advisories.

Chief Judge Hanson states, "Out of an abundance of concern for the health and well-being of the citizens of Carroll, Jo Daviess, Lee, Ogle and Stephenson Counties, and consistent with the recommendations of the Illinois Supreme Court, as well as the County Health Departments

within our circuit many of the civil and criminal cases in the 15<sup>th</sup> Judicial Circuit will be postponed and suspended beginning on Monday, March 16, 2020 and continuing through Friday, April 17, 2020.”

The Courts will take the following action, effective Monday, March 16:

- No jury trial in criminal or civil matters will begin with the time period of this suspension. Individuals who have been summoned to jury duty should not report for jury duty. They will receive a new date for service. Grand jury proceedings will be continued during the period of suspension.
  - For all adult criminal cases, all trials and many hearings scheduled within the period of suspension will be postponed to a future date. Hearings that will proceed within the period of suspension include bail hearings, arraignments and preliminary hearings. In addition, defendants may continue to enter into plea agreements to conclude their case. Any pre-trial defendant may also request a bail review during this time.
  - In addition, during the period of suspension, probation officers will contact clients to inform them that they will schedule meeting to be held by phone conversation. Clients deemed high-risk may be required to report to their probation officers in person at the discretion of the probation officer.
  - All traffic, DUI and criminal misdemeanor cases scheduled in the period of the suspension will be rescheduled to a future date, except that hearings on Petitions to Rescind Summary Suspensions will be set for hearing in accordance with the applicable statute.
  - For delinquency and criminal proceedings involving juveniles, the only matters which will occur within the time period of the suspension are demands for trial and detention hearings that determine if a juvenile is held in custody while the case is pending.
  - Judges will hear cases of child abuse or neglect in which the state seeks protective custody of a child, and judges will hear emergency motions in which children are allegedly abused in foster care.
  - For domestic violence matters petitioners may seek orders of protection during the period of suspension, and hearings on the Petitions will be heard within the period of suspension, as provided by statute. Litigants may also seek an order of protection related to an existing civil domestic relations case (such as dissolution of marriage). Emergency petitions may also be filed in child-support matters and bona fide emergency parenting time disputes at the discretion of the court. Such emergency petitions may proceed telephonically at the discretion of the Court. Agreed orders setting forth new duties or setting teleconferences for new dates is encouraged.
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- All specialty courts will be continued.
- Child support enforcement matters will be continued to a future date.
- During the period of suspension, all civil matters not deemed an emergency will be postponed to a future date. Emergency requests in civil matters will be permitted and may be held telephonically at the discretion of the court.
- No new orders for possession arising from an eviction or foreclosure proceeding will be heard during this period of suspension.
- New civil lawsuits may still be filed via electronic filing.
- Marriages: We will continue to perform marriages in the courthouse as needed. When calling the court for the respective county to schedule a wedding, you will be advised of any specific restrictions which may be in effect in that county.
- Tours: Any courthouse tours scheduled between now and Friday, April 17 are canceled. Future courthouse tours may be scheduled in the same manner initially scheduled.
- Each courthouse shall post a sign at its entrance notifying the public that only essential cases will be heard March 16-April 17, 2020.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT CHIEF JUDGE ROBERT T. HANSON AT 815-732-1197

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