

For Immediate Release

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Amended Oregon Chief Justice Order modifies and extends actions to minimize in-person court business, preserve access to court, maintain community health and safety

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(Salem, Ore.) Oregon Chief Justice Martha L. Walters today ordered that restrictions on trials and other court proceedings and operations continue until further order. Most trials and many other hearings will be postponed and will not be scheduled to begin until after June 1, 2020, under the amended Chief Justice Order issued today.

“We must continue to restrict the number of people coming into our courthouses to help limit the spread of the COVID-19 virus,” Chief Justice Walters said. “We will continue to fulfill our constitutional and statutory responsibilities and do our best to address immediate access to justice issues, but much of our work will have to be postponed to minimize the health risk in our communities.”

Under an amended order and a number of supplemental orders issued today, Oregon circuit courts will:

- Postpone trials until at least June 1, 2020, unless an earlier trial is required by statute, the constitution, or a case-specific court order finding that an earlier trial is necessary. Trials that are held will be conducted by remote means if legally permitted and reasonably feasible.
- Ensure that essential proceedings, including proceedings to issue protective orders and orders in certain family, juvenile, guardianship, and quarantine cases, can continue through remote means or with as little in-person contact as possible.
- Postpone all court proceedings currently scheduled to be held before June 1, 2020 that do not meet the criteria in the order.
- Require all in-person court proceedings to allow six feet of physical distance between participants.
- Limit in-person court services and post or publish information about how people can access court services.
- Continue to receive case documents and provide other essential service.
- Continue to have many judges and staff work remotely. The Judicial Department has distributed about 200 laptops and expanded its technology systems to increase its ability to allow that.
- Encourage courts to reduce or waive fines for people with limited resources. Courts have taken other actions to reduce collection activities.
- Continue to protect public safety while working with justice partners to reduce jail populations.

Oregon's Tax Court, Court of Appeals, and Supreme Court also will determine how to continue their operations while limiting health risks and will publish information about their services.

Chief Justice Walters has also requested legislative leaders to pass laws in the upcoming special session that would give her temporary authority to modify statutory timelines and require remote trials and hearings during the COVID-19 emergency declared by Governor Brown. If passed, the Chief Justice intends to take further action to reduce the need for lawyers and members of the public to enter courthouses.

Walters also signed other Chief Justice Orders today responding to the pandemic and reduce requirements for in-person contacts. Those orders authorize courts to waive or suspend collection fees and expand use of electronic signatures

The full Chief Justice orders and more information about Oregon's state courts, including any updated news or alerts, can be found at www.courts.oregon.gov.

The Oregon Judicial Department (OJD) includes the Oregon Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, Tax Court, circuit courts in every Oregon county, and the Office of the State Court Administrator. The Department is committed to protecting rights and democracy by maintaining a strong, fair, and impartial court system. For more information, visit www.courts.oregon.gov.