



PRESS RELEASE

**New York State
Unified Court System**

**Hon. Felix J. Catena
Administrative Judge
Fourth Judicial District**

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Virtual Court Operations to Commence in 4th Judicial District

Courts Remain Open for Essential Proceedings

NEW YORK—In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hon. Felix J. Catena, Fourth Judicial District Administrative Judge, announced that effective April 6, 2020, virtual court operations will commence via videoconferencing for all courts within Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Hamilton, Montgomery, Saratoga, Schenectady, St. Lawrence, Warren, and Washington Counties for essential proceedings.

“For the health and safety of our court employees and those who enter our courthouses, we have implemented temporary measures designed to reduce exposure to the Coronavirus,” Judge Catena said. “We initially consolidated all court proceedings into central locations, reduced the maximum occupancy of all courtrooms, waiting rooms and meeting rooms in court facilities, and adjourned all non-essential matters for a minimum of 45 days, allowing only designated judges and essential staff to report to the courthouse for work. Now, as the pandemic intensifies, there is a need to further reduce courthouse density. Accordingly, the Fourth Judicial District will begin hearing all essential matters virtually.”

On March 16, 2020, Judge Catena issued an Administrative Order directing that all non-essential functions of the courts be postponed and that each county’s court operations be consolidated in one building. An amendment to this Order allows judges, court

reporters, parties, their attorneys and any other interested party to appear by video conferencing capability such that they will not be physically present in the courtroom. A minimal core team of essential staff, including security, will remain at each courthouse to ensure the ability to intake papers, operate videoconferencing equipment, process orders, keep court record and conduct other essential court functions. The Virtual Courtroom Protocols that were developed apply to all categories of essential court functions and have been distributed to stakeholders.

Judge Catena added, “We are making the necessary changes in our court operations to maintain essential and emergency operations and will continue to proactively monitor the COVID-19 situation and make adjustments accordingly.”

Individuals with court-related questions are encouraged to call their designated county courthouse. Contact information, as well as information related to postponements, are available online for all courthouses in the Fourth Judicial District at <http://ww2.nycourts.gov/courts/4JD/index.shtml>

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