

COVID-19 Update: Effect on Maryland Courts and Legal Entities

As MSBA continues to monitor the spread of COVID-19 in our area, we are providing updates regarding Maryland court systems and legislative entities to our members. **We will continue to post updates to our website, available [here](#). Please bookmark the page and recheck as necessary for the latest information.** Details are also available below.

Maryland Federal Courts

The United States District Court for the District of Maryland is restricting courthouse entry to certain members of the public (began on March 12, 2020) to contain the spread of COVID-19. On March 12, 2020, U.S. District Chief Judge James K. Bredar issued a [standing order](#) regarding entry. People who have travelled to high-risk countries, the state of Washington, and New Rochelle, New York, are banned from the courthouse.

Late on March 12, 2020, Judge Bredar also issued an order suspending all civil and criminal jury trials in the court until April 24, 2020. The full order can be found [here](#).

Maryland Judiciary (as of March 13, 2020)

As of March 13, 2020, the Maryland Judiciary has made [changes](#) to current operating procedures, including the closure of Prince George's District and Circuit Court to the public and statewide suspension of jury trials (details below).

The Court has also [ordered](#) the statewide suspension of non-essential judicial activities due to emergency. The Order minimizes in-state travel, suspends out of state and out of country travels, suspends all in-person judicial education classes, and limits committee meetings to conference call. The Order specifically states that:

- Due to the outbreak of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, and consistent with guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control, an emergency

exists that poses a threat of imminent and potentially lethal harm to vulnerable individuals, including some Judiciary personnel, who may come into contact with a court or judicial facility and personnel,

- To the extent possible, the courts and judicial offices and units shall remain operational and provide scheduled and required events while balancing the health and safety needs of court visitors and personnel, and
- There are certain activities that, in the event of such emergency conditions, may be considered non-essential and therefore require suspension.

Current and updated Administrative Orders from the Judiciary can be found [here](#).

MSBA has contacted the Judiciary on behalf of our membership with questions and concerns. MSBA will continue to monitor the situation and inform our members about any further updates from the Judiciary.

Statewide Suspension of Jury Trials (as of March 12, 2020)

Due to the outbreak of COVID-19, Chief Judge Barbera [ordered](#) on March 12, 2020 that:

1. All civil and criminal jury trials in the Circuit Courts throughout the state of Maryland scheduled to begin on March 16, 2020, through April 3, 2020, shall be suspended on an emergency basis pending further Order of the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals; and
2. In criminal matters with jury trials pending during the above time period, county administrative judges shall hold hearings as necessary to resolve

Maryland Rule 4-271 issues in individual cases and to set a new trial date

Prince George's County Circuit Court (as of March 12, 2020)

As of March 12, 2020, the Chief and Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court of Prince George's County, Sheila R. Tillerson Adams, ordered that the Circuit Court for Prince George's County shall be closed to the public until April 6, 2020. Court employees are to report to work as usual. No Grand Jury or Petit Jury during this time period. Specifically, Judge Adams' order states:

ORDERED, that at this time, the Circuit Court for Prince George's County will be closed to the public until April 6, 2020, and it is further

ORDERED, all employees that have offices in the Courthouse shall report to work as usual, and it is further

ORDERED, that the 24-hour drop box for pleadings will be available at the Commissioner's entrance of the Courthouse to accept and date stamp the pleadings, and it is further

ORDERED, that court staff will be available to accept phone calls and emails from the public during this period, and it is further

ORDERED, that Bond hearings will be heard daily.

Prince George's County District Court (as of March 12, 2020)

Closed to the public. Staff report to work as usual.

Baltimore City Circuit Court

As of March 12, 2020, the Circuit Court for Baltimore City ordered that the following persons shall not enter the Mitchell Courthouse, 100 N. Calvert Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, the Cummings Courthouse (formerly known as Courthouse East), 111 N Calvert Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, or the

Juvenile Justice Center, 300 North Gay Street Baltimore, MD 21202 without prior permission from the Administrative Judge:

- Persons who have been in any of the following countries or regions within the last fourteen (14) days: STATE OF WASHINGTON; NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK; CHINA; SOUTH KOREA; JAPAN; ITALY; IRAN; EGYPT.
- Persons who reside or have had close contact with someone who has been in one of the countries listed above within the last fourteen (14) days;
- Persons who have been asked to self-quarantine by any doctor, hospital, or health agency;
- Persons who have been diagnosed with, or have had contact with, anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19;
- Persons who are experiencing any acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath, headaches), flu-like symptoms, have a fever, or are coughing or sneezing.

If you are scheduled or required to appear in the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, and you are unable to appear because of the restrictions in this Order, you are directed to proceed as follows:

- If you are represented by an attorney, please contact your attorney;

- If you are an attorney and you are scheduled to appear in court before a judge, please contact that chambers directly;
- If you are scheduled to meet with a Pretrial Services Officer, please contact the Office for Pretrial Services at 410-986-5909;
- If you are to report to the Community Service Office, please contact the Office at 410-396-1191.

Please click through to the full [Order](#) for further details

United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Maryland (as of March 12, 2020)

The United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Maryland, in conjunction with the United States District Court, is closely monitoring the novel coronavirus known as COVID-19 and is following all recommended guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Maryland Department of Health. Persons over the age of 60 and people of all ages with severe underlying health conditions – such as immunodeficiency, heart disease, lung disease, and diabetes – appear to be at a higher risk of developing a serious COVID-19 illness. If you are scheduled to appear in bankruptcy court and fall into one of these high-risk groups, or if you are experiencing any flu-like symptoms, and may need to be excused, please email, or if necessary call, the Courtroom Deputy for the Judge assigned to your case.

Chapter 13 Dockets

Effective immediately, until further notice, Chapter 13 debtors represented by counsel are asked not to attend the Standing Chapter 13 Trustee's dockets.

Affidavits Encouraged to Increase Social Distancing

Counsel are strongly encouraged in all cases to file along with motions or objections affidavits and authenticated documentary evidence that may establish a prima facie case sufficient to enable the court to rule on the matter without live testimony, as appropriate.

Telephonic Appearances

Counsel should review each judge's practice for appearing telephonically at court hearings, located on the Court's website under "Judges' Info."

Courthouse Entrance Protocol

The U.S. District Court has also issued Standing Order 2020-02 concerning restrictions on visitors to U.S. Courthouses in this District. Please review this Standing Order for more information

From the Maryland Office of the Attorney General (on March 12, 2020)

Effective immediately, and until further notice, the Attorney General of Maryland will be accepting service of process by email on the State, State agencies, and State officers sued in their official capacity. See Md. Rule 2-124(j). Please visit the State Treasurer's website for details regarding email service on the State Treasurer under the Maryland Tort Claims Act, Md. Code Ann., State Gov't § 12-108.

A party may email a complaint and writ of summons or a subpoena to the Office of the Attorney General, Civil Division at civil_service@oag.state.md.us. Parties may request service by email on individual State employees or officers sued in their individual capacity. The Attorney General can accept service on individuals only after obtaining the individual's permission. The serving party will be notified promptly whether the Attorney General will accept service on the defendant(s) or witness. Service shall be complete when an Assistant Attorney General in the Civil Division confirms by return email that the Attorney General has accepted service.

Baltimore USCIS

Baltimore USCIS will be offering same-day naturalization oath ceremonies to individuals who are 60 years or older, expectant mothers, or to any individual with a compromised immune system or an underlying chronic medical condition. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services cannot inquire about an applicant's medical history. If you are eligible for a same-day naturalization ceremony based upon these criteria, please notify the Immigration Services Officer at the time of your interview so that the necessary steps may be taken.

Maryland Legislature

Maryland lawmakers are streamlining procedures during the final weeks of Session in response to COVID-19 outbreak. The State House will be closed to public access, including all scheduled tours and outside visitors, and will only be accessible to those persons with a State-issued badge.

The mission of the MSBA is to effectively represent Maryland's lawyers, to provide member services and to promote professionalism, diversity in the legal profession, access to justice, service to the public and respect for the rule of law.

If you have questions, please contact info@msba.org
or call [410.685.7878](tel:410.685.7878) / [800.492.1964](tel:800.492.1964).

[Maryland State Bar Association](#)
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