



Trial Courts
OF THE
Northeastern Judicial Circuit

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DAWSON AND HALL COUNTIES

For Immediate Public Release

NORTHEASTERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT EXITS LOCAL EMERGENCY
Many COVID-19 Safety Precautions Will Continue

In consultation with judicial and county officials, as well as local health leaders, the Georgia Judicial COVID-19 Task Force, and this circuit's COVID-19 Jury Committee, Chief Judge Kathlene F. Gosselin has permitted the Northeastern Judicial Circuit's COVID-19 judicial emergency to expire earlier this week, on June 7, 2021, without renewal. The circuit-wide emergency was first declared on March 13, 2020.

In its place, a new order has been entered that will continue many of the health and safety protocols previously implemented in the Hall and Dawson county court systems. This revised order, effective immediately, supersedes and replaces all previous pandemic orders and operating guidelines. It also anticipates the termination of the *statewide* judicial emergency, which Chief Justice Harold D. Melton has said is likely occur at the end of the month.

Most significantly, this week's order continues to recognize the particular threat to public health posed by COVID-19. The justice system serves everyone—from the least to the most vulnerable of populations—often by compelling the attendance of its participants. For that reason:

- If you're sick or have been exposed to COVID-19, you should stay home and alert the court prior to appearing in person.
- All classes of court are encouraged to use virtual hearings wherever appropriate.
- In line with current CDC recommendations, masks are strongly encouraged.
- Social distancing requirements have been relaxed, but large calendars will continue to be restricted and staggered report times utilized.

These new protocols will also have the effect of eliminating the need to conduct jury proceedings at larger, off-site locations. Hall County State Court trials will no longer be conducted at the North Hall Community Center, and Superior Court proceedings previously announced as taking place at Lanier Tech's Ramsey Conference Center later this month will no longer require the use of that facility. Instead, all jury trials will take place at the Hall County Courthouse.

"County Commissioners and, in particular, Hall County Parks and Leisure, were wonderful to provide the alternate space for us at the Community Center," states Hall County State Court Chief Judge B.E. Roberts. "We're grateful for their extraordinary effort and glad to return to home turf."

Prospective jurors will continue to report at staggered times and be given instructions on how to communicate any covid-related concerns prior to the day of their service.

For further information, department contact information, and future updates, please visit the circuit's website at www.nejc.org.