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6 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
7 WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON

8 In Re:

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10 COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE
11 EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES
12 CREATED BY COVID-19 AND
RELATED CORONAVIRUS

GENERAL ORDER NO. 02-20

13 This General Order is being issued in response to the developing outbreak of
14 Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and in conjunction with the Court's March 6, 2020,
15 General Order, which limited in-Court appearances and continued all jury matters.
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17 In response to the continued spread of COVID-19, President Trump has declared a
18 national emergency and issued guidelines directing at-risk individuals including those 60 and
19 older, to stay home and away from other people, and encouraging everyone to work from home
20 whenever possible, to avoid discretionary travel, and to avoid social gatherings in groups of
21 more than ten people. Governor Inslee has also declared a state of emergency. The Centers for
22 Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") and other health authorities have advised people to
23 take precautions to reduce the possibility of exposure to the COVID-19 virus and to slow the
24 spread of the disease. In particular, the CDC is recommending that people attempt to keep
25 physical distance between themselves and other people. This technique, known as social
26 distancing, is especially important for people who have a higher health risk should they
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1 contract the disease. The CDC is recommending employers attempt to minimize exposure
2 between employees and the public and to consider the public health and safety when scheduling
3 group or public events. Additionally, there is recent evidence indicating that COVID-19 may
4 be spread by persons who are asymptomatic.

5 Given this guidance, and to protect the safety and health of all those entering and
6 working in the Courthouse, the Court ORDERS, effective immediately:
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- 8 1. The Seattle and Tacoma Courthouses will be closed to the public except as stated
9 below. This temporary closure will last at least 30 days and may be continued based on
10 public health guidance.
- 11 2. All civil and criminal hearings and trial dates in these Courthouses scheduled to occur
12 before June 1, 2020, are continued pending further order of the Court. The Court may
13 proceed with video/telephonic conferences as appropriate and at the discretion of
14 individual judges. Scheduling orders in cases may need to be amended as appropriate
15 on a case-by-case basis. This paragraph does not apply to Bankruptcy Court hearings,
16 which are addressed below.
- 17 3. All grand jury proceedings scheduled before June 1, 2020, are continued.
- 18 4. With regard to criminal matters, due to the Court's reduced ability to obtain an adequate
19 spectrum of jurors and the effect of the above public health recommendations on the
20 availability of witnesses, counsel and Court staff to be present in the courtroom, the
21 time period of the continuances implemented by this General Order will be excluded
22 under the Speedy Trial Act, as the Court specifically finds that the ends of justice served
23 by ordering the continuances outweigh the best interests of the public and any
24 defendant's right to a speedy trial, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §3161(h)(7)(A). For the same
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1 reasons, the Court finds under 18 U.S.C. § 3060(C) extraordinary circumstances exist,
2 and justice requires delay of all criminal preliminary hearings during the time period of
3 the continuances implemented by this order.

- 4 5. All criminal initial appearances and detention hearings will be conducted via
5 video/telephone conference with the defendant's permission, unless directed otherwise
6 by the Court.
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- 8 6. Due to the nature of bankruptcy proceedings, the Bankruptcy Court will continue with
9 scheduled non-evidentiary hearings telephonically as posted on the Bankruptcy Court's
10 website (www.wawb.uscourts.gov) and announced by the individual bankruptcy judge.
11 All evidentiary hearings and trial dates scheduled to occur before June 1, 2020, are
12 continued pending further order. These may proceed with video/telephonic conferences
13 as appropriate and at the discretion of individual judges. Scheduling orders in cases may
14 need to be amended as appropriate on a case-by-case basis.
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- 16 7. Individual judges may continue to conduct emergency matters in the Seattle and
17 Tacoma Courthouses if necessary after considering the above public health situation.
18 Those required to attend these matters will be permitted to enter the Courthouses.
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- 20 8. This Order does not affect the Court's consideration of civil or criminal motions that
21 can be resolved without oral argument. Attorneys and pro se parties are encouraged to
22 continue to file documents with the Court electronically through CM/ECF.
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- 24 9. Staff in each of the Clerks' Offices will be available by telephone, mail will be
25 received, and new filings will be processed. However, the Court's intake window will
26 be closed. Those wishing to make in-person filings will be directed to leave such
27 materials at established drop off points near the entrance to the courthouses.
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1 10. All five Probation and Pretrial Offices will be closed. However, drug testing will
2 continue as directed by U.S. Probation and Pretrial. A duty officer will be able to
3 answer telephonic questions.

4 If you have a scheduled appointment or are otherwise required to appear at the
5 courthouse but are denied entry, you should proceed as follows:

- 6 • If you are represented by an attorney, please contact your attorney;
- 7 • If you are an attorney or a pro se litigant and you are scheduled to appear in court before
8 a judge, please contact that judge's chambers or courtroom deputy (see court websites at
9 www.wawd.uscourts.gov/judges and www.wawb.uscourts.gov/chambers-information);
- 10 • For all other matters or questions, please contact the Clerk's Office at (206) 370-8400
11 (Seattle) or (253) 882-3800 (Tacoma). For questions related to bankruptcy court please
12 contact the Bankruptcy Court Clerk's Office at 206-370-5200 (Seattle) or 253-882-3900
13 (Tacoma).

14 This Order amends and supersedes the Court's previous General Order 01-20 related to
15 COVID-19. The Court will vacate or amend this General Order no later than April 15, 2020.
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17 Dated this 17 day of March 2020.

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22 RICARDO S. MARTINEZ
23 CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE
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