

NOTICE TO THE BAR

COVID-19 – SUMMONING OF JURORS FOR POSSIBLE IN-PERSON JURY TRIALS ON OR AFTER MAY 17, 2021

The Supreme Court has authorized the summoning of new jury pools for possible in-person reporting for socially distanced jury trials. The modified summons documents will inform prospective jurors (1) that the jury selection process will begin in a virtual format; and (2) that their service may continue virtually or may involve reporting in person to a courthouse with safety precautions. The new “virtual or in-person” summons option will apply to jury pools scheduled to report on or after May 17, 2021.

The Judiciary is continuing to closely monitor relevant COVID-19 trends, including those in the COVID-19 Activity Level Index ([CALI](#)) weekly reports posted by the New Jersey Department of Health. The New York Times reports that as of March 1, 2021, the statewide 14-day average showed a 12% decrease in deaths and a 24% decrease in hospitalizations. Over that same period, new daily cases ticked up by 3%. NJ DOH is continuing to report more than 2500 new COVID-19 cases per day. Even that significant figure, however, is less than one-half of the number of new cases reported at the start of 2021.

Current and ongoing public health trends generally are encouraging. If those downward trends continue, the Judiciary hopes to be in a position to support more onsite presence and in-person events, including socially distanced jury trials. If trends change, however, we will adjust and instead assign jurors to fully virtual civil jury trials. The “virtual or in-person” summons documents will support substantial advance notice to jurors and will provide for the flexibility for those jurors to serve in a manner that is safe and consistent with public health guidance.

Vicinage judges will continue to conference civil cases for trials. Consistent with the Court’s January 7, 2021 Order, virtual civil jury trials will proceed statewide as of April 5, 2021 with no requirement of consent. Judges also will conference the substantial number of pending criminal cases for trials, with the expectation that those trials will proceed once in-person trials resume.

The Court’s November 16, 2020 Order suspended all in-person jury selections and new in-person jury trials, which had been permitted pursuant to the Court’s July 22, 2020 Order (and appended Plan). The Court will provide further guidance in a future Order before any jurors (including any grand jurors) are asked to report in person or any trial proceeds in person.

Questions about this notice may be directed to the Office of the Administrative Director of the Courts at (609) 376-3000.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Glenn A. Grant", is written over a horizontal line.

Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D.
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts

Dated: March 4, 2021