

IN THE TRIAL COURTS FOR THE STATE OF ALASKA
SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT

In the Matter of:)
)
SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT) Presiding Judge
GRAND JURY PROCEEDINGS) Administrative Order No. 20-04
) (Effective June 23, 2020)
)

TEMPORARY ORDER ON GRAND JURY PROCEEDINGS

This Presiding Judge Administrative Order outlines the temporary procedures that will be in place as grand jury proceedings are resumed during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹ Over the past several months, preventative safety measures, including the wearing of masks and the exercise of social distancing, have been imposed by governmental health officials to reduce the risk of spreading the virus. The courtrooms used for grand jury proceedings in the Second Judicial District (Kotzebue, Nome, and Utqiagvik Courts) are not of sufficient size to provide adequate space for social distancing eighteen grand jurors, prosecutor, witnesses, and court staff. Additionally, air travel to Second Judicial District court locations is restricted because several communities require COVID-19 testing and quarantine until a test result is returned.

Moreover, the Nome Superior Court will be located in a temporary facility without space to hold grand jury proceedings during the months of July and August.

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT,

1. In order to maintain social distancing, the number of persons that will comprise the grand jury will be temporarily reduced to panels of fourteen members. To return a true bill in favor of indictment eight members of the grand jury panel must vote in favor of indictment.
2. Because the Nome Court will not have space to conduct hearings, a grand jury proceeding for a case that would normally be convened in the Nome Superior Court may now also be convened in the Kotzebue or Utqiagvik Superior Courts.²

¹ Presiding judges have been authorized by the Chief Justice to craft orders necessary to facilitate grand jury proceedings during the COVID-19 pandemic. *See* SOCJ No. 8144; No. 8148.

² SOCJ No. 8148; Alaska Criminal Rule 6(b).

3. Witnesses and interpreters may appear by telephone or video conference subject to the requirements outlined in Special Order of the Chief Justice No. 8148.
4. Prosecutors may appear telephonically for grand jury proceedings when air travel to a community would require COVID-19 testing and quarantine or a “hunker down” order is in place.³ Prosecutors shall inform the Court in advance when appearing telephonically.
5. All grand jury proceedings shall be conducted with strict adherence to social distancing, face coverings, and other health requirements imposed by state and local government health mandates, presiding judge orders, or administrative bulletins.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated this 23rd Day of June, 2020 at Kotzebue, Alaska.



PAUL A. ROETMAN
Presiding Judge
Second Judicial District

³ Supreme Court Order No. 1957.