

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

In Re: Grand Jury Proceedings During )  
The Suspension of In-person Hearings )  
Due to the Ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

Presiding Judge Administrative Order  
No. 20-06

**TEMPORARY ORDER REGARDING GRAND JURY**

Special Order No. 8213 suspends all in-person grand jury proceedings until at least February 1, 2021 due to the ongoing COVID pandemic.<sup>1</sup> Special Order No. 8204 authorizes any district affected by the pandemic to conduct grand jury proceedings via videoconference. When the interests of justice require, a presiding judge is empowered to convene grand jury at a site other than the site designated by the Criminal Rule 18 venue map.<sup>2</sup>


Kotzebue Court successfully piloted a grand jury project utilizing video conferencing in October and November.<sup>3</sup> Utqiagvik does not have sufficient internet bandwidth to conduct grand jury proceedings via videoconferencing. Nome Court has been operating with only 50% of its clerical staff due to ongoing staff vacancies that have not been successfully filled despite repeated recruitments. In the face of these significant challenges it remains necessary to allow grand jury proceedings to continue in the Second Judicial District in an effort to reduce the significant backlog of pre-indictment felony cases caused by the pandemic.

**IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED THAT:**

1. Felony criminal cases that would normally be presented before a grand jury in Nome or Utqiagvik will now be held before a Kotzebue grand jury via video conference;
2. the prosecutor may participate by video conference from a location outside Kotzebue;
3. this Order is effective until in-person grand jury proceedings resume..

**IT IS SO ORDERED.**

Dated at Kotzebue, Alaska this 7<sup>th</sup> day of December 2020.

  
PAUL A. ROETMAN  
Presiding Judge  
Second Judicial District

<sup>1</sup> Special Order No. 8213 was issued November 25, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Criminal Rule 6(b).

<sup>3</sup> The pilot project was authorized under Supreme Court Order No. 1957.