IN THE SUPREME COURT OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
SPECIAL ORDER OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE
ORDER NO. 8155

Update regarding COVID-19 and Jury Trials

The number of active COVID-19 cases in Alaska remains high. Public health authorities advise that transmission of the disease may be mitigated by social distancing, face coverings, and other health measures. But most state courtrooms are barely adequate to accommodate the parties, attorneys, court personnel, and a standard jury panel with adequate social distancing. The court administration needs additional time to devise procedures that will allow jury trials to proceed safely. And most courtrooms do not have adequate space to safely accommodate a public audience or a large jury selection assembly. Therefore, under the authority of Supreme Court Order No. 1957,

IT IS ORDERED:

1.   Jury trials remain suspended until at least September 1, 2020. The period of this delay, beginning March 16, will continue to be excluded in computing the time for trial under Alaska Criminal Rule 45(d). When this suspension is lifted, the time for trial will continue to be tolled for the time necessary to permit an orderly transition and scheduling.

2.   In order to promote social distancing when jury trials resume, the public may be required to participate by teleconference, videoconference, or video feed.

3.   Also to promote social distancing, court administration and trial judges may impose limits on jury panel qualification, assembly, and selection procedures. Jury questionnaires may be expanded to identify qualification and hardship issues and to expedite the exercise of juror challenges.

4.   All trials shall be conducted with strict adherence to social distancing, face coverings, and other health requirements imposed by government health mandates, presiding judge orders, and administrative bulletins.

DATED: June 15, 2020

Joel H. Bolger
Chief Justice

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