



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

District of Minnesota

John R. Tunheim, Chief Judge

Kate Fogarty, Clerk

Warren E. Burger Federal
Building and U.S. Courthouse
316 North Robert Street
Suite 100
St. Paul, MN 55101
(651) 848-1100

Diana E. Murphy U.S.
Courthouse
300 South Fourth Street
Suite 202
Minneapolis, MN 55415
(612) 664-5000

Gerald W. Heaney Federal Building
and U.S. Courthouse and Customhouse
515 West First Street
Suite 417
Duluth, MN 55802
(218) 529-3500

Edward J. Devitt U.S.
Courthouse and Federal Building
118 South Mill Street
Suite 212
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
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March 30, 2020

NEWS RELEASE

United States District Court for the District of Minnesota COVID-19 Update 4

Minneapolis, MN – As a result of the enactment Friday of the CARES Act, and Judicial Conference action, the United States District Court for the District of Minnesota has implemented temporary changes to procedures governing the handling of criminal cases. The new law specifically allows video conferencing for all matters excluding trials with the consent of the defendant.

On March 27, 2020, the President signed into law the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, or CARES Act, which allows videoconferencing for certain federal criminal proceedings. On March 29, 2020, the Judicial Conference of the United States made the necessary finding under the CARES Act that COVID-19 emergency conditions have materially affected and will materially affect the functioning of the federal courts. In response, Chief Judge John R. Tunheim issued General Order No. 5 today implementing the procedure for the District of Minnesota.

General Order No. 5 authorizes the use of videoconferencing, or telephone conferencing if videoconferencing is not reasonably available, with the consent of the defendant, or the juvenile, after consultation with counsel, for the following criminal proceedings: detention hearings, initial appearances, preliminary hearings, waivers of indictment, arraignments, probation and supervised release revocation proceedings, pretrial release revocation proceedings, appearances after violations committed in other districts, misdemeanor pleas and sentencings, and certain juvenile proceedings. The Order also permits video conferencing with consent of the defendant for felony pleas and sentencings if the presiding judge finds that case cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice.

The Order is effective beginning March 30 and will last ninety days unless terminated earlier. Please review the attached order for more specific details:

https://www.mnd.uscourts.gov/sites/mnd/files/2020-0330_COVID-19-General-Order-No5.pdf

The Court continues to monitor the most current statements from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as all communications disseminated by the Administrative Office of the U. S. Courts (AO), regarding the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The Court is following recommended guidelines from public health officials and preparedness guidance from the AO, including cancelling or postponing all non-essential events and travel, increasing sanitation efforts in all courtrooms and public spaces, and increasing remote working options for staff.

Additional questions can be directed to Media Coordinator, Rebeccah Parks at Rebeccah_Parks@mnd.uscourts.gov.

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