

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND**

**COURT OPERATIONS UNDER THE EXIGENT CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY COVID-19**

**GENERAL ORDER 20-002**

Due to the declaration of a pandemic/public health emergency by the World Health Organization, which was followed by the declaration of a State of Emergency in the State of Rhode Island by Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo, the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Rhode Island will take the following steps to mitigate the risks to employees' and the public's exposure to and spread of the harmful virus, while maintaining court operations, in accordance with the recommendations of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention ("CDC") and other public health authorities.

The CDC advises people to take precautions to reduce the possibility of exposure to the COVID-19 virus and to slow the spread of the disease. In particular, the CDC recommends that people keep physical distance between themselves and others. This technique, known as social distancing to curtail community spread, is especially important for people who have a higher health risk should they contract the disease. The CDC also recommends that employers take steps to minimize exposure between employees and the public and to consider the public health and safety when scheduling public events.

Therefore, in order to protect public health and to reduce unnecessary travel and the size of public gatherings to less than 25 people as ordered by Governor Raimondo, while also enabling the Court to remain open to fulfill its judicial obligations and continue its critical business, the following temporary, emergency conditions are effective immediately:

1. All trials and evidentiary hearings scheduled to commence at any time during the Covered Period are hereby continued generally. All such trials and evidentiary hearings will be rescheduled at a later date. The "Covered Period" is the period of time beginning on the date of this order and continuing through (and including) April 17, 2020.
2. During the Covered Period, all other hearings and conferences will take place as scheduled, except that participation in all such hearings will be telephonic and will be recorded. Notice of the telephonic hearing instructions will be provided to all parties in advance of the scheduled hearing. Please call the Courtroom Deputy at 401-626-3136 if you have questions.
3. At its discretion and on a case-by-case basis, the Court may continue to hold hearings (evidentiary and non-evidentiary), conferences, and bench trials by videoconference or other similar means. Hearings, including evidentiary hearings and bench trials, may be conducted in person when necessary to avoid immediate and irreparable harm to a party.
4. Staff in the Clerk's Office will be available by telephone and email. Regular mail will be received and the Clerk's Office will remain open for filings. The public is encouraged to continue utilizing the Court's services including accessing information and court forms from its website at [www.rib.uscourts.gov](http://www.rib.uscourts.gov), subject to all applicable public health guidelines.
5. Due to the fluidity of the situation, the Court may alter or amend this order as may be necessary to achieve the stated goal of protecting the public health while, at the same time, continuing to fulfill the Court's mission and its duties to litigants and the public.

SO ORDERED.

Date: March 17, 2020

/s/ Diane Finkle

---

United States Bankruptcy Court