

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF WISCONSIN

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Update on the court's response to coronavirus

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May 1, 2020

The State of Wisconsin is beginning to lift some of the most stringent social distancing restrictions. But the number of new cases of COVID-19 is still increasing in areas of the state, including in some counties in the Western District of Wisconsin. Based on the recommendations of public health officials, it is not yet safe to gather in groups of 30 to 50, which is what it takes to select and seat a trial jury. Information about the virus and its spread changes daily, but it is unlikely that gatherings of the size needed for a jury trial will be advisable within the next month.

The court does not want to reschedule any more trials than is necessary, but last-minute schedule changes pose a hardship on everyone. Given the continuing uncertainty, we will extend the suspension of jury trials through June 30, 2020, so that the court, counsel, parties, and potential jurors can plan ahead. We will enter the appropriate orders in the affected cases. But in general, we expect all pre-trial deadlines, including the final pre-trial conference, to remain in place, so that the affected cases are ready for trial at the earliest safe opportunity.

The court continues most of its operations despite the coronavirus. Court staff were well prepared for teleworking, and we have adapted to video teleconferencing for many proceedings that would have been held in court. For now, we limit in-person proceedings to those necessary for public safety, but we will resume in-person proceedings as circumstances

permit. We expect that litigants or counsel have also adapted to the circumstances, but they may request relief from specific deadlines if the coronavirus prevents them from meeting them.

Thank you again for your cooperation during these difficult times.

JAMES D. PETERSON  
Chief District Judge