AOPC

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE of PENNSYLVANIA COURTS

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2020

Supreme Court of Pennsylvania Declares General Statewide Judicial Emergency

HARRISBURG – Amid COVID-19 mitigation efforts, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court today declared a statewide judicial emergency effective until April 14, 2020.

With the emergency declaration in place, county president judges are authorized to declare individual county judicial emergencies through April 14, 2020, should they deem it appropriate to protect the health and safety of staff, court users and the community.

Specifically, counties operating under local judicial emergencies shall have the authority to:

- Suspend time calculations for the purposes of time computation relevant to court cases or other judicial business, as well as time deadlines, subject to constitutional restrictions;
- Authorize additional uses of advanced communications technology to conduct court proceedings, subject to constitutional restrictions; and
- Take any action permitted pursuant to Rule of Judicial Administration 1952(B)(2), including restrictions or temporary closures of court facilities.

The emergency declaration specifically authorizes president judges to suspend the operation of Rule of Criminal Procedure 600 within a judicial district, for the length of the judicial emergency. The Supreme Court Order, however, does not affect a criminal defendant's right to a speedy trial under the United States and Pennsylvania Constitutions.

Judicial Districts operating under the emergency declaration will arrange for the provision of essential judicial services, including arraignments and bail establishment hearings and protection from abuse act proceedings.

Additional information about the impact of COVID-19 on court operations is available online, at @pennsylvaniacourts and @PACourts.

###

Media contact: Stacey Witalec, 717-877-2997