

**IN THE CHANCERY COURTS OF THE FOURTH DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
INCLUDING AMITE, FRANKLIN, PIKE AND WALTHALL COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI**

COVID- 19 EMERGENCY GENERAL ORDER OF CONTINUANCE

THIS CAUSE HAVING COME on this day for consideration whether this Court should conduct routine hearings and trials of cases set before this Court during the period of the pandemic emergency posed by the COVID-19 crisis, and the Court being mindful of the findings and matters set forth in the Emergency Administrative Orders issued by the Mississippi Supreme Court, the Statewide Shelter-In-Place Order issued by Governor Tate Reeves on April 1, 2020 (together with the other orders to which it makes reference), and the Center for Disease Control guidelines which Donald J. Trump, President of the United States, has urged the States and the public to follow, this Court does hereby find and order as follows, to-wit:

1.

The Chancery Court is not closed and shall remain open for the conduct of hearings in emergency matters only. All hearings and trials on all non-emergency matters which have been previously set for call, hearing or trial during the month of **April 2020** are hereby continued to a date after the state of emergency has been declared to have passed. After consultation with the Court Administrator and agreement by all parties, a matter may be continued to an actual hearing or trial date. All matters that do not have a specific order of continuance entered therein are hereby continued to the Motion Day set in the county where the action is pending for the month of **June 2020** for resetting. Motion days for June 2020 are as follows:

Pike Chancery Courthouse, Magnolia, MS-(Smith)--June 1, 2020, 9:00 a.m.
Pike Chancery Courthouse, Magnolia, MS (Halford)--June 4, 2020, 9:00 a.m.
Franklin Courthouse, Meadville, MS--June 2, 2020, Halford-9:00 a.m., Smith-10:30 a.m.
Walthall Courthouse, Tylertown, MS--June 3, 2020, Halford-9:00 a.m., Smith-10:30 a.m.
Amite Courthouse, Liberty, MS--June 5, 2020, Halford-9:00 a.m., Smith-10:30 a.m.

2.

In order to remain available for handling emergency matters during this period, Counsel shall first attempt to resolve the matter by consultation with counsel opposite, or the opposing litigant, if unrepresented. If there is an allegation of abuse or neglect of a minor child, attorneys and litigants shall immediately report allegation of abuse or neglect to the Mississippi Department of Children Protection Services (CPS) for investigation and action, before contacting the Court for an emergency setting. **The toll-free, twenty-four hour telephone number for reporting abuse and neglect allegations is 1-800-222-8000.** If the matter cannot be resolved through CPS action or does not involve allegations of abuse or neglect, Counsel shall email to the appropriate Court Administrator a request for Emergency Consideration to the Court, with a copy of sworn pleadings signed under oath by the party seeking relief, any documents offered in support of the pleadings and a Counsel's Certificate of Exigent Circumstances which sets forth the basis of the exigent circumstances, the efforts to resolve the matter, and all contact information (telephone, email and physical address) for the litigants and any counsel believed to be involved in the action. If the matter is not already an open file wherein Counsel can file their submissions in MEC, Counsel should attempt to contact the appropriate chancery clerk by telephone to arrange the filing of the action so that an MEC file can be opened. **The Clerks of the District are authorized and directed to accept pleadings by email and filing fees by electronic payment methods to avoid undue exposure to the staff or participants.** Submissions to Judge Halford must be submitted to ctadministrator@telepak.net. Submissions to Judge Smith must be submitted to mary@msdistrict4.com. The Court shall take appropriate action to address the matter whether by consideration of affidavits, telephone conference or video conference which does not compromise the health of the participants or staff.

Routine Court business not requiring a hearing which is being submitted ex parte shall be submitted to the Court through email to the appropriate Court administrator and shall be handled within the parameters available to the Court. **All submission shall be by email in order to avoid the exposure and transmission of contagions which may have attached to mailed or hand-delivered documents.**

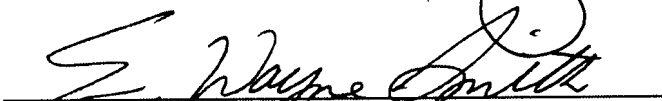
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that all service of process, including, but not limited to witness subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum, which has been properly issued, served and return made to the Court, shall remain in full force and effect and shall be further returnable to said date.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that the Clerk of Court shall file this order in MEC in each case set during the month of April 2020 and to distribute said order to Counsel through MEC and to unrepresented parties by other means, if necessary.

SO ORDERED this the 2nd day of April, 2020.



CHANCELLOR DEBBRA K. HALFORD



CHANCELLOR WAYNE SMITH