



SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA COUNTY OF MONTEREY

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**PRESS
RELEASE**

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MONTEREY COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT TO RESUME CRIMINAL JURY TRIALS BEGINNING JUNE 1

Monterey County Superior Court announced today that it will resume criminal jury trials beginning the week of June 1, 2020.

Court Executive Officer and Jury Commissioner Chris Ruhl said, "The court provides essential services to the residents of our county and state. The right to a timely jury trial in criminal cases lies at the heart of the essential services that we provide, because it lies at the heart of the rights guaranteed by the U.S. and California Constitutions."

During the early stages of COVID-19 on March 23, 2020 California Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye suspended all jury trials for 60 days. That suspension terminates on May 22, 2020. In a subsequent order dated April 29, 2020, the Chief Justice allowed 30 additional days to conduct a criminal trial but stressed: "Courts are strongly encouraged to collaborate with local justice partners to conduct a trial at an earlier date, if a court may do so in compliance with applicable health and safety laws, regulations, and orders."

Following the order of the Chief Justice, trials that are set for June 1, 2020 will proceed. The court is required to summon jurors at least one month before any trial date. Juror summons have been mailed out summoning jurors to appear during the week of June 1, 2020.

In preparation for restarting jury trials, the Court is implementing an array of measures to ensure the safety of everyone involved in jury trials – jurors, court staff, defendants, attorneys and judicial officers. Many fewer jurors will be summoned to court on any given day to allow for appropriate safeguards. Social distancing will be maintained throughout the trial process, from jury selection through jury deliberation. Face masks and/or face coverings will continue to be required for everyone who comes to the courthouse. Alternative larger venues to accommodate jury selection will be employed. Fewer trials will be in session at any one time to reduce the number of people in the courthouse.

Because empaneled juries will need to be seated and spaced around the entire courtroom to ensure social distancing, members of the public may be precluded from attending jury trials in person. Public call-in lines have been created for each courtroom so that members of the public can call in to listen to jury trials and other court matters that are open to the public. See the Court's website for more information: <https://www.monterey.courts.ca.gov/>.

Summoned jurors who have health concerns related to COVID-19 will be allowed to defer their service to a future date. In addition, the Jury Service page on the Court's website will be updated very soon to provide more specific guidance and information to summoned jurors, and to respond to juror questions and concerns.

Presiding Judge Julie Culver said, "We treasure jurors as one of the most valuable assets of our democracy. The safety of our jurors who fill this vital and essential role in our community is always a top priority. We have never been more grateful for the willingness of the people of Monterey County to participate in jury service, as it is truly a cornerstone of our democracy."

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