

RICHARD M. COWART
CHIEF JUDGE
POST OFFICE BOX 806
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31603-0806
TELEPHONE: 229/671-2680
FACSIMILE: 229/245-5308

JAMES E. (JIM) HARDY
JUDGE
POST OFFICE BOX 2037
THOMASVILLE, GEORGIA 31799-2037
TELEPHONE: 229/228-6370
FACSIMILE: 229/228-6369

BRIAN A. MCDANIEL
JUDGE
POST OFFICE BOX 2227
MOULTRIE, GEORGIA 31776-2227
TELEPHONE: 229/616-7445
FACSIMILE: 229/616-7447

JAMES L. PRINE
JUDGE
POST OFFICE BOX 678
THOMASVILLE, GEORGIA 31799-0678
TELEPHONE: 229/228-6276
FACSIMILE: 229/225-4128

GREGORY A. VOYLES
JUDGE
POST OFFICE BOX 1349
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31603-1349
TELEPHONE: 229/333-5130
FACSIMILE: 229/245-5223



**State of Georgia
Superior Courts
Southern Judicial Circuit**

**BROOKS, COLQUITT, ECHOLS,
LOWNDES & THOMAS COUNTIES**

H. ARTHUR McLANE
SENIOR JUDGE
POST OFFICE BOX 505
VALDOSTA, GEORGIA 31603-0505
TELEPHONE: 229/333-5130
FACSIMILE: 229/245-5223

FRANK D. HORKAN
SENIOR JUDGE
POST OFFICE BOX 2227
MOULTRIE, GEORGIA 31776-2227
TELEPHONE: 229/616-7445
FACSIMILE: 229/616-7447

HARRY JAY ALTMAN, II
SENIOR JUDGE
POST OFFICE BOX 1734
THOMASVILLE, GEORGIA 31799-1734
TELEPHONE: 229/228-6276
FACSIMILE: 229/225-4128

TIM C. HENDRICK
COURT ADMINISTRATOR
POST OFFICE BOX 2227
MOULTRIE, GEORGIA 31776-2227
TELEPHONE: 229/616-7474
FACSIMILE: 229/616-7447

MEMORANDUM

TO: All Attorneys Practicing in the Southern Judicial Circuit
Moultrie Bar Association
Thomasville Bar Association
Valdosta Bar Association

CC: Clerks of Superior Court of Brooks, Colquitt, Echols, Lowndes, and Thomas Counties

FROM: Chief Judge Richard M. Cowart *RCM*
Judge James E. Hardy *JH*
Judge Brian A. McDaniel *BAM*
Judge James L. Prine *JLP*
Judge Gregory A. Voyles *JVP*

DATE: September 28, 2020

RE: Procedures for the Southern Judicial Circuit

The Court issued a memo on May 6, 2020, in reference to the Superior Courts in the Southern Judicial Circuit, and the procedures for holding Court during the pendency of the pandemic. Some adjustments are being made as follows:

SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT POLICY BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2020

- ◆ **Jury Trials:** Jury Trials will resume in each county of the Southern Circuit in January of 2021. Superior Court will continue to hold civil non-jury trials.
- ◆ **Grand Juries:** New Grand Juries will be sworn in and presentments will begin starting in late October, 2020.
- ◆ **Criminal Hearings:** Bond hearings, motion hearings, probation revocations, and guilty pleas will continue as they have been. The presiding judge will decide whether or not the criminal calendar will be held by virtual courtroom, conference call, or in person in a courtroom.
- ◆ **Civil Hearings:** Civil hearings (temporary domestic, TPO, adoptions, contempt cases, summary judgement, etc) have long resumed, but the procedure will change as follows:
 - ◆ All attorneys and pro se parties will be required to appear at 9:30 a.m. for the calendar to be called by the Judge. Once the calendar is called, the Judge will instruct the attorney or pro se party of the time their case will be called to start.
 - ◆ All parties and witnesses will be “on call” and should not appear at the courthouse or in the courtroom until summoned to do so by their attorney or by the party who issued their subpoena or requested their presence. All parties, clients, witnesses who are “on call” should be ready to appear within 30 minutes of the Court’s announcement of the time their case will be called for hearing. If an earlier hearing is settled, concluded, or continued, the next case on the list may be called earlier than announced.
 - ◆ **Time Limits: Time Limits will be strictly enforced.** If the attorney setting the hearing stated that the hearing will take 1.5 hours, then that is all the time that BOTH parties will be allotted. A total of 1.5 hours for BOTH sides. The presiding Judge will keep the parties constrained to the time limits set on each hearing. Again, that time amount is for both sides, not just one. **This will be strictly enforced. No temporary hearings will be heard for more than 1.5 - 2 hours TOTAL (not per side), even if the parties are the last ones on the calendar.** If at any time prior to the case being called for hearing, either attorney realizes their case is going to take longer than the assigned time, they shall notify the Court or court staff immediately.
 - ◆ **IF YOUR HEARING SETTLES please let the Judge’s office know at the earliest time possible.**
 - ◆ **Court Reporters.** If you want your case reported, please inform the Clerk’s office when you schedule the hearing.
 - ◆ **ALL PARTIES INCLUDING ATTORNEYS** will be required to wear a mask when entering the Courthouse. Please ensure your staff, clients, and witnesses are aware of this. If your client/witness/staff does not have a mask, please bring extras as **NO** one will be allowed into the Courthouse without a mask. Please let your client and witnesses know that upon entering the Courthouse, the security team in each

Courthouse will ask questions regarding their health and ensure the parties are wearing a mask before they are let into the Courthouse. Please allow time for this when telling your clients/witnesses what time to attend Court.

- ◆ **Witness Subpoena:** All witness subpoenas need to state that if the witness has been running a fever, experiencing any of the COVID-19 symptoms, anyone in their home has been running a fever, or if they have come into contact with a COVID-19 patient then they must notify the clerk immediately. The Court will not hold anyone in contempt or force the attendance of any sick or exposed witness or client.
- ◆ **Non-Contested Divorces/Name Changes/Legitimations:** The Courts will continue to grant non-contested divorces, name changes, and legitimations by affidavit at this time. When sending the documents to the Judge's staff, please include a signed and notarized affidavit from the Plaintiff, the complaint, settlement agreement, and Final Order. Also, make sure that the appropriate amount of time has passed before sending to the Judge for his signature.
- ◆ **Final Hearings:** Each Judge is setting their own bench trial schedule. Please contact the Judge regarding setting a final non jury hearing. No final hearings will be scheduled on weekly civil hearing calendars.
- ◆ **Emergency Ex parte Hearings.** All emergency ex parte hearings are to be scheduled through the Judges' office.
- ◆ **Adoptions:** Adoptions will be placed on a calendar. Please contact the Judge granting the adoption for clarification on the amount of people allowed to be present for the adoption. Adoptions with surrenders and/or terminations may be held over teleconference or in person. Please contact Brooklyn Key during this time with any questions regarding adoptions at brooklynvkey@gmail.com for Brooks, Thomas and Colquitt counties. Please contact Niki Brooks at nbrooks@lowndescounty.com, for Lowndes and Echols counties.

Additionally, all court personnel shall follow all safety guidelines provided by the CDC, Georgia Department of Health and Local Health Departments.