

**IN THE UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
EASTERN AND WESTERN DISTRICTS OF ARKANSAS**

GUIDELINES FOR IN PERSON COURT HEARINGS AND TRIALS

Commencing March 1, 2022, the United States Bankruptcy Courts for the Eastern and Western Districts of Arkansas plan to resume in-person court hearings. In order to adhere to the CDC's social distancing guidelines, President Biden's Executive Order, and to keep staff, attorneys, and parties safe during the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, the court has developed guidelines for conducting in-person hearings and trials for the Central and Fayetteville (including Harrison cases) divisions. The same guidelines, in addition to any guidelines required by local practices, will be enforced in the Delta, El Dorado, Fort Smith, Hot Springs, Northern, and Texarkana divisions.

If counsel, a witness, or a party has special concerns or potential health complications making her or him uncomfortable with an in-person appearance, counsel should contact the appropriate chambers to discuss alternate arrangements.

Divisional Days. Your disposition cutoff for settlements, continuances, etc., will continue to be noon the day before the divisional day. Although we plan to resume in-person divisional days, please coordinate with each other to keep the number attorneys announcing settlements and continuances in-person to a minimum. Counsel should continue to communicate settlements and requests for continuances to each chamber in the usual manner. We encourage you to continue to meet the noon deadline. Attorneys are responsible for making certain their clients and witnesses do not show up at the courthouse for any matters that have been settled or continued. In the event your matter will need to be heard, counsel should provide a time estimate to the appropriate

chambers as expeditiously as possible. The guidelines for hearings and trials outlined below should be followed when making in-person appearances on divisional days.

Hearings/Trials. As stated above, the three bankruptcy judges plan to resume in-person hearings and trials on March 1, 2022. If you appear for court, please adhere to the following guidelines, any one of which can be waived at or during a hearing or trial by the presiding judge. Attorneys are responsible for informing clients and witnesses of these guidelines.

- You, your clients, and your witnesses are expected to bring and wear masks from the moment you enter the courthouse until you leave. This includes during the hearing or trial. Masks may be removed during active participation in the proceeding at the discretion of and with the permission of the presiding judge.
- You are expected to observe social distancing in the hallways, elevators, and courtroom.
- Openings, examinations of witnesses, and closings may be conducted at the lectern and the overhead/Elmo devices will be available. Hand sanitizing wipes and gel will be available at counsel tables for use after using the lectern or overhead devices.
- Witnesses will testify in the witness box. Disinfecting wipes and hand sanitizer will be located in the witness box and may be used by the witness prior to taking his or her seat. Witnesses are encouraged to wash or sanitize their hands before and after taking the witness stand.
- To reduce the number of times counsel may need to approach other counsel and the court to present exhibits, counsel are encouraged and expected to email each other and the court PDFs of as many of their anticipated exhibits as possible prior to the hearing or trial. You will receive an email from chambers with a deadline for submitting the exhibits. You will still be expected to introduce the exhibits during the hearing or trial. You will not be limited to the exhibits you email prior to the hearing or trial as the court recognizes that there may be other documents that become relevant based upon testimony or evidence.
- Water will NOT be provided. You may bring bottled water into the courthouse and courtroom. Cups or other containers with liquids are not permissible.

The above guidelines are intended to be enforced in compliance with CDC guidelines in effect at the time of the hearings and trials. If you have any questions regarding these guidelines, please

contact the chambers for your particular matter. We thank all of you for your individual and collective efforts to accommodate and protect each other.