

August 5, 2021

Nathan Ochsner, Clerk of Court

By Deputy Clerk 

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS  
HOUSTON DIVISION

IN RE: COURT OPERATIONS IN                   §  
THE HOUSTON DIVISION                       §  
UNDER THE EXIGENT                           §                   SPECIAL ORDER H-2021-16  
CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED                   §  
BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC               §

THIRTEENTH SUPPLEMENTAL ORDER

This Order applies in the Houston Division of the Southern District of Texas and supersedes Special Order H-2021-12.

The current surge of COVID-19 cases and Delta variant infections has increased the risks to public health and those involved in selecting juries, conducting jury trials, and convening grand juries. Although the Houston Division federal courthouse remains open, the following Order on jury trials and Grand Jury proceedings is entered:

1. Jury trials (criminal and civil) scheduled to begin from this date until September 7, 2021, are continued, to a date to be reset by each presiding judge. Those continuances do not affect any deadlines other than the jury trial dates. Attorneys should contact the presiding judges in their cases if they want to modify other deadlines.

2. Due to the public-health risks, the periods of the continuances implemented by this Order are excluded under the Speedy Trial Act, 18 U.S.C § 3161 (h)(7)(A). The court finds that the ends of justice served by ordering these continuances outweigh the interest of the public and of each defendant in a speedy trial. Indeed, the best interests of the public are served by these continuances.

3. Any currently scheduled sessions of the Grand Jury in the Houston Division until September 7, 2021 are continued. Related deadlines are suspended and tolled for all purposes, including the statute of limitations, from this date until September 7, 2021.

4. Individual judges may continue to hold bench trials, in-person hearings, sentencing proceedings, scheduling conferences, and other court proceedings. Counsel may seek relief by appropriate requests or motions. The use of telephone or video conferencing in these proceedings is encouraged when feasible, deemed appropriate by the presiding judge, and permitted by legal and technological constraints.

5. This Order does not impact any judge's continuing discretion to consider and decide particular matters on the pleadings alone. This Order is intended to give each judge discretion to handle his or her docket on a case-by-case basis, aside from the general continuance of jury trials ordered above.

6. This Order does not apply to Bankruptcy Court proceedings. Separate Bankruptcy Court Orders address those proceedings.

7. Unless extended, this Order remains in effect until September 7, 2021, absent further order or action.

8. Our court will continue to meet its constitutional obligations while taking steps to protect the public and our employees. The courthouse remains open, and the courts are working to address pending matters and keep the cases moving toward resolution.

Signed this 5th day of August 2021.



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LEE H. ROSENTHAL  
CHIEF JUDGE