

JAN 21 2022

Darrel E. Parker, Executive Officer
BY Tanya Perez, Deputy Clerk

SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

Re:) General Order of the Presiding Judge
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TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF JURY))
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TRIALS))
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In March 2020, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the President of the United States declared a national emergency and the Governor of California declared a state of emergency. Both emergency declarations remain in effect as the COVID-19 virus continues as a life-threatening pandemic throughout the county, state, and local jurisdictions.

In its efforts to protect the health and well-being of court personnel and the public throughout the pandemic, the Santa Barbara Superior Court implemented various protocols intended to protect against the spread of the virus. As community spread of the virus lessened, the Court began resumption of normal operations in part by relaxing, and in some cases rescinding COVID-19 related protocols.

There is currently a pronounced spike in COVID-19 cases due to the Omicron variant. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the COVID-19 Omicron variant is highly transmissible and evades immunity provided by past infection or vaccination. First identified in November of 2021, in a short period of time the Omicron variant has led to an exponential increase in COVID-19 infections worldwide, throughout

1 California, and within the County of Santa Barbara. Santa Barbara County, already an area
2 of high transmission, has recently experienced an alarming increase in COVID-19 cases.
3 The COVID-19 dashboard for Santa Barbara County shows that the current positivity rate for
4 COVID-19 cases is 18.8% as of January 21st. Additionally, hospitalizations have increased by
5 40% from the 2-week average.

6 Considering the ease of transmission of the Omicron variant, conducting jury trials
7 would unduly endanger court personnel, litigants, attorneys, jurors, and the public, as well
8 as threaten the continuous performance of essential Court functions and operations.

9 Therefore, to protect the health and well-being of the public and court personnel, for
10 good cause and pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure §§124 and 128, Government Code
11 §68070, Cal. Rules of Court, rule 10.603, the inherent powers of the Court (*In re Reno*
12 (2012) 55 Cal.4th 428, 522), and in compliance with federal, state and local guidelines, the
13 Court hereby finds and orders as follows:

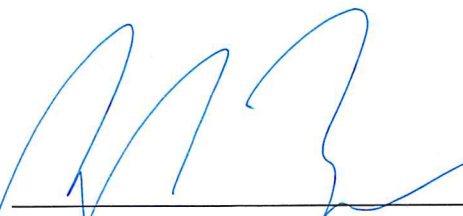
- 14 1. All civil and criminal jury trials are hereby suspended until further notice. This
15 order is only applicable to jury trials that have not commenced. This order does
16 not affect jury trials that are in progress, which will be addressed on a case by
17 case basis by the judicial officer presiding over the trial.

18 This order does not restrict or otherwise abrogate the express or inherent authority of the
19 Court and its judges to provide for the orderly conduct of proceedings. The Court reserves
20 the authority to rescind or modify any part of this order, as appropriate, to address
21 changing circumstances.

22 This order is effective January 21, 2022.

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24 IT IS SO ORDERED

25 Dated: 1/21/22



26 Presiding Judge, Gustavo E. Lavayen
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