

IN RE: BUSINESS OF COURT

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS  
FOR THE 26TH JUDICIAL  
DISTRICT, COLUMBIA /MONTOUR  
COUNTIES PENNSYLVANIA

**ORDER SUSPENDING JURY TRIALS  
THROUGH September 1, 2021**

(PA SUPREME COURT # 41-MM-2020)

**ORDER**

**WHEREAS**, this Court ordered a judicial emergency in the 26th Judicial District on May 28, 2020, extending through December 31, 2020, which order suspended jury trials through September 1, 2020; an order of August 7, 2020, suspended jury trials through September 1, 2020; an order dated October 7, 2020 suspending jury trials through December 31, 2020; and an order dated November 19, 2020, suspending jury trials through April 30, 2021, and extending the judicial emergency through June 30, 2021; and

**WHEREAS**, jury trials involve congregating well over one hundred people in one location for jury selection; and

**WHEREAS**, this Court has studied options provided in detail by the Pennsylvania Conference of State Trial Judges (an excellent and very comprehensive study) and other sources including courts who have attempted to engage in jury selection during the pandemic; and

**WHEREAS**, this Court has considered a risk/benefit analysis for conducting jury trials during this pandemic at this time, including additional costs, health concerns, community spread, fluid pandemic circumstances, and prevailing health and safety norms; and

**WHEREAS**, this Court deems it prudent for the safety of its staff, court users, potential jurors, and the public to suspend jury trials beyond though at least September 1, 2021 and to extend the judicial emergency through December 31, 2021.

**THEREFORE**, this 19<sup>th</sup> day of February 2021, the court **ORDERS** that

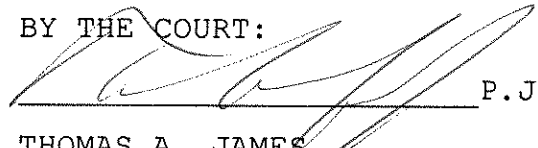
1. Jury trials in the 26th Judicial District are suspended until September 1, 2021. Thereafter, trials will be held,

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provided they can be conducted safely and consistent with prevailing health and safety norms.

2. The judicial emergency in the 26<sup>th</sup> Judicial District is extended until December 31, 2021.
3. The Pandemic Safety Protocols Order dated November 2, 2020, effective until the termination of the judicial emergency, shall remain in full force and effect.
4. The court continues to encourage court staff, counsel, litigants, and all others involved in the court process to permanently adopt efficient procedures developed during the court emergency and to discard inefficiencies that may have been insidiously engrained in the court culture.

BY THE COURT:

  
P.J.

THOMAS A. JAMES