

## **Court Postponements and Transition to Virtual Court Hearings**

The latest weekly report received from Cullman Regional Medical Center indicates that their ICU is now operating at over 100% capacity and the hospital currently has 83 patients who are COVID-19 positive, 21 of whom are currently on ventilators. Further, the number of COVID-19 cases in our area is expected to increase even more during the next few weeks due to Christmas and New Year's Eve family gatherings. While CRMC has managed to respond admirably to recent challenges and is currently able to provide care for all COVID-19 patients, the potential shortage of critical care beds and nurses at our local hospital is a cause for concern, if numbers continue to increase.

To help slow the spread of COVID-19 within our community, a decision has been made by Cullman County circuit and district judges to postpone some non-essential in-person judicial proceedings and to utilize video conferencing to conduct virtual court proceedings, where feasible. The civil non-jury cases set before Judge Nicholas and Judge Williams for January 5, 2021 will be virtual court hearings only, so parties and witnesses will not need to appear in person and will be provided information regarding how to participate in virtual court trials. District Judge Chad Floyd has also postponed his traffic court docket set for January 6, 2021. Those cases have been reset for March 3, 2021. In addition, jury trials currently scheduled for January 25, 2021 have been postponed until February, when hopefully local conditions have improved, and jury trials can be resumed.

Despite the changes, Cullman Circuit and District courts will remain open and motions may still be filed in all cases either electronically or directly through the Circuit Court Clerk's Office. Virtual court hearings will be held for the remainder of January as a substitute for in-person proceedings, where feasible. In cases where it is necessary to provide immediate relief in emergency circumstances and for all court proceedings deemed so essential that a postponement is not appropriate, in-person judicial proceedings will be held utilizing previously adopted COVID-19 safety measures. Thanks for your understanding and for your cooperation as judges make necessary adjustments to court calendars to keep our local courts open to serve the public.

Sincerely,

Greg Nicholas  
Presiding Court Judge