

From: Chief Judge Sally Tarnowski

Date: June 11, 2020



Greetings to all of you! I hope this finds you well.

I want to update you on a few things from our District.

First and foremost, I am so proud to tell you about the number of hearings we have been able to hold in the Sixth. During the year 2019, we averaged 1,139 hearings per week as a District. During the week before we went to remote hearings, we held 913 total hearings around the District. Last week, we held 1,012 hearings!

This is a testament to the profound dedication of court staff, judicial staff, District staff, managers, supervisors, judicial officers and all of you to ensure that the public has access to justice and that the courts are open for business.

As these numbers indicate, we have continued to expand the case types and hearings types that we are doing. There are very few hearing types we are not doing.

We are also working on plans throughout the District to hold our first criminal jury trials. I have created a steering committee consisting of a judge from each building as well as district and court administration that will direct this effort. Each judge has created a local committee in his/her courthouse to address this on a courthouse basis. We are anxiously awaiting information from the pilot counties who have begun holding jury trials to help us go about setting these. There will be no criminal jury trials before July 6 in our District. Our plan will be to start slowly and mindfully. I will keep you informed as we know more about when those will commence in each location.

We also have a plan in place to start tackling our criminal backlogs and will start setting more and more first appearances throughout the District beginning the first part of July.

We will continue to hold hearings remotely until it is safe to do in person hearings. This can include evidentiary hearings. Most of our courthouse buildings remain closed at this time, but beginning on Monday, June 15, we will have public counters and terminals open in each building. The safety of our staff and court users is our paramount concern, and each location has measures in place to ensure this, including cleaning and sanitization, signage, requirement of masks, etc.

We are in the process of examining each courtroom to see what modifications need to be made to hold in person hearings when those eventually happen and, again, will ensure that safety precautions are adopted.

As always, please share this with your colleagues and staff. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Thanks, and stay well.

Sally Tarnowski