



## Administrative Office of the Courts

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### **Supreme Court pauses jury trials through the end of the year**

SANTA FE – As a safeguard against the spread of COVID-19, the state Supreme Court today paused criminal and civil jury trials across New Mexico through the end of the year.

New Mexico’s appellate, district, metropolitan and magistrate courts will remain open while operating with COVID-safe procedures, including requiring masks and health screening for everyone who enters a courthouse and strict enforcement of a minimum six-foot physical distancing by court staff and members of the public.

“Pausing jury trials will protect the public while allowing critical court functions to continue,” said Chief Justice Michael E. Vigil. “This additional precaution will reduce the number of people who need to come to a courthouse at a time when the state has tightened public health order restrictions on New Mexicans because of a spike in COVID-19.”

“Particularly during a public health emergency, courts must remain open to ensure our justice system protects community safety and the rule of law,” said Chief Justice Vigil.

The state’s public health emergency order does not require the closing of any court operations, but the Judiciary is pausing jury trials as an additional safeguard for the public and those who work in courthouses while maintaining vital justice services.

An order issued by the Supreme Court suspends jury trials until Jan. 1, 2021. Any exception for a new jury trial to proceed will require approval of the Chief Justice. The suspension applies to trials scheduled to begin on or after Nov. 16 — not to any trials currently underway.

Judges, as they have throughout the pandemic, will continue to conduct non-jury trials and other civil and criminal proceedings through video and telephone conferencing. This allows courts to hear critical legal matters such as potential public health cases and the initial pleas of people charged with crimes, make constitutionally required pretrial decisions, and issue restraining orders to protect domestic violence victims. In-person court hearings may occur in limited instances with approval of the chief judge of a judicial district.

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Attachments:

[Supreme Court Order No. 20-8500-039](#)  
[Amended New Mexico Judiciary Public Health Protocols](#)