

UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

IN RE: §
§
ORDER ESTABLISHING PROTOCOLS § GENERAL ORDER 2020-3
FOR COURT OPERATIONS DURING §
THE COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH §
EMERGENCY §
§

ORDER ESTABLISHING PROTOCOLS FOR
COURT OPERATIONS DURING THE COVID-19
PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

Background

On March 11, 2020, Louisiana Governor, John Bel Edwards declared a Public Health Emergency in Louisiana related to COVID-19. On March 13, 2020, President Donald J. Trump issued a Proclamation Declaring a National Emergency Concerning the Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Outbreak. Additionally, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has provided, and is continually updating, guidelines as to the appropriate community response to COVID-19. This Court is also concerned with protecting the health and safety of the public, Court employees, staff of other entities with whom the Court personnel interact, litigants, counsel, etc.

The Declarations and CDC Guidelines are aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19 through the general population. In furtherance of that goal, the CDC and other public health entities have

recommended "social distancing" to limit further community spread of the virus. Following this recommendation requires that public gatherings be held to a minimum for the foreseeable future. In order to comply with the recommendations the Court has adopted a Protocol that will be applicable in all bankruptcy cases and proceedings until further notice from the Court (the "Protocol Period").

Order

Therefore, it is Ordered that the following **Protocol** is adopted:

1. The Court is not altering hearing dates for motions or applications at this time, but the hearings will be conducted in accordance with the Protocol in this Order. However, each Judge of this District maintains the authority to alter and conduct hearings for their respective divisions as they deem appropriate.

Non-Evidentiary Hearings

2. The Court will conduct all non-evidentiary hearings via telephone. Attorneys and parties-in-interest wishing to participate in non-evidentiary hearings must dial in to hearings using the following dial-in numbers and access codes:

A. Judge Hodge (Shreveport/Monroe Divisions):

Dial-in Number: 1-888-363-4734
Access Code: 6480377#

B. Judge Kolwe (Lafayette/Lake Charles Divisions):

Dial-in Number: 1-877-411-9748
Access Code: 2239270#

C. **Judge Wheelis** (Alexandria/Monroe Divisions):

Dial-in Number: 1-877-336-1831

Access Code: 5893351#

3. Telephone hearings will be recorded using the Court's digital recording system or other external recording technology associated with the telephone dial-in number. If the Court's digital recording system is inaccessible, the recordings using the recording technology associated with the telephone dial-in number will be made available to the public in accordance with the Clerk's standing policy and will constitute the official Court record.
4. Each person speaking at a telephonic hearing must restate that person's name each time that person speaks. The information will assist the Court during the hearing and will assist any transcribers of the audio recording.

Evidentiary Hearings

5. In the event an evidentiary hearing is required, the Court must be provided notice at the earliest opportunity. The Judge will then issue guidance on how the hearing will be conducted, including directions for the exchange and filing of witness and exhibit lists and the exhibits themselves into the record.

Emergency Hearings

6. During the Protocol Period, emergency hearings must be requested in accordance with the local rules and/or each individual Judge's applicable procedures.

Calendaring

7. Unless otherwise ordered, the setting of hearings remains the same in accordance with the Planning Calendars available for each Judge on the Court's website.

Statutory, Court-Imposed, or Rule-Imposed Deadlines

8. Unless otherwise ordered by the Court, all statutory and other deadlines remain in effect.

Section 341 Meetings

9. The United States Trustee's office, Chapter 13 Trustees and/or panel Trustees shall notify all parties-in-interest as to the handling of Section 341 meetings during the Protocol Period.

Continuance of Trials

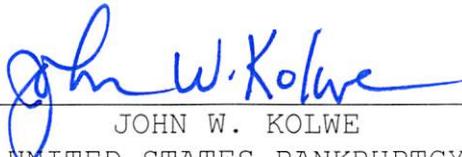
10. All trials in adversary proceedings scheduled to begin on any date from the date of entry of this order until May 1, 2020, are continued, to a date to be reset by each presiding judge. All other hearings, conferences and/or proceedings are subject to the discretion of the presiding judge.

Variance from Protocol

11. Each Judge may vary this Protocol on a case-by-case basis.

DATED: March 15, 2020.

FOR THE COURT:



JOHN W. KOLWE
CHIEF UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY JUDGE
Western District of Louisiana