

MEMO

TO: County Mayors, Judges, Clerks, Court Security Personnel, Attorneys, and Litigants

FROM: Douglas T. Jenkins, Chancellor, Presiding Judge

RE: **TEMPORARY POLICY FOR MASKS-THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT**

DATE: June 29, 2020

There has been an outbreak of COVID-19 cases in the Hamblen County Jail, and an uptick in the numbers district wide. I conducted a telephone conference call today with county mayors, judges, clerks, and others. The purpose of the telephone conference call was to search for and decide upon potentially proactive and temporary amendment(s) to our court policies in reaction to the jail outbreak and uptick in numbers. In order to protect those who use the court system and those who work in and around court, the following decision was made:

I. IN ALL COUNTIES OF THE THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT, the court procedures for reopening which were approved by the TN Supreme Court on April 30, 2020 and June 15, 2020 shall remain in full force and effect *except* on the finite issue of masks, the following more stringent policy will be effective Monday, July 6, 2020 and remain in effect until August 1, 2020: the wearing of face masks **SHALL BE REQUIRED** for all judges, clerks, bailiffs and court security personnel, litigants, attorneys, and anyone else who are *inside* a court house.

The **EXCEPTION** to this temporary policy is that masks *may* be removed by a witness who is giving testimony, judges who are on the way to or on the bench, lawyers who are trying their case(s) or otherwise addressing the court, and clerks seated in the courtroom during court who are adequately social distanced or clerks who are at their work stations in the clerks' offices and properly social distanced.

Any judge has the authority to require masks to be worn at all times in their courtroom at their discretion.

II. This mandate shall be made known by the court to any disobedient person. Any person after having been personally admonished by the court to wear a mask may be ordered to leave the premises and/or punished for contempt. Each judge is charged with enforcement of the above in his/her courtroom. In the common areas of the courthouse, the courthouse security personnel are charged with enforcement.

III. Masks shall be made available free of charge to litigants at the courthouse entry security check-in area.

IV. All possible efforts will be made to do video arraignments and pleas in order to minimize the back and forth between the courtrooms and jails.

V. Extreme prudence will be exercised with respect to cleaning of the podiums, chairs, tables, and microphones in the courtrooms.

END OF MEMO.