



*State of North Carolina*  
*General Court of Justice*  
*Judicial District 11B*

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**TO: JOHNSTON COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE  
JOHNSTON COUNTY CRIMINAL DEFENSE BAR**

**FROM: *JHL* THOMAS H. LOCK, SENIOR RESIDENT SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE**

**DATE: 16 MARCH 2020**

**RE: MODIFICATIONS TO SCHEDULE OF CRIMINAL SUPERIOR COURT,  
WEEK OF 16 MARCH 2020**

On Sunday evening, 15 March 2020, Chief Justice Cheri Beasley issued a memorandum to judges and other court officials clarifying her order of 13 March 2020 restricting court operations for at least thirty days in response to the COVID-19 (corona virus) epidemic. Her memorandum made it clear that, except in emergency matters and those involving criminal defendants in custody, all in-person proceedings should be postponed or cancelled if possible. Accordingly, I issued a directive last night cancelling the grand jury session for today and relieving attorneys of their obligation to appear for calendar call this morning.

Please note that my directive did not cancel the entire session of court this week. It is imperative that we attempt to dispose of cases involving defendants housed in our severely overcrowded jail. On Wednesday, 18 March 2020, at 9:30 am, I will hear felony probation violations from this week's calendar involving defendants in custody. On Thursday, I will adjudicate any guilty pleas involving in-custody defendants, whether the cases are scheduled for this week or some later time.

Attorneys in those jail cases scheduled for this week are expected to be in court unless they believe they have been exposed to the corona virus or they belong to an at-risk group (that is, if they have compromised immune systems or suffer from severe chronic medical conditions such as heart disease or diabetes). Those believing they are at risk should notify Judicial Assistant Ann Wood at 919-209-5511 or Trial Court Coordinator Barbara Johnson at 919-209-5512.

District Attorney Susan Doyle has assured me that her assistants will be flexible in negotiating plea agreements in these cases. Likewise, I will be as reasonable as possible in

imposing judgments. I also will make myself available this Wednesday afternoon in chambers behind Courtroom #2 to engage in plea conferences in those jail cases in which the State and the defense are unable to reach some agreement in their plea negotiations.

Later this week, I will issue a memorandum or enter an administrative order regarding the other criminal and civil superior court sessions over the next thirty days. Please also understand that any decisions concerning these sessions may need to be modified, often on short notice, depending on the evolution of the COVID-19 epidemic. Thank you for your cooperation and understanding as we sail these uncharted waters.