



PRESS RELEASE

JUDICIAL BRANCH EXTENDS PARTIAL CLOSE OF OPERATIONS DUE TO THE THREAT POSED BY COVID-19

In light of the emergency Puerto Rico faces, and in order to protect the health of our community and Judicial Branch staff, the partial close of operations of the Judicial Branch will be extended until Sunday, April 12, 2020. This was announced by the Administrative Director of the Courts, Hon. Sigfrido Steidel Figueroa. “The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Hon. Maite D. Oronoz, reaffirmed that her priority is to safeguard the health of Judicial Branch staff and of the those who visit the courts. Consequently, the partial close of operations, originally decreed through March 30, is extended until Sunday, April 12, 2020. However, the Judicial Branch is an essential component of our national security, and thus will continue to operate through its municipal courts to address new urgent matters, as it has been since the onset of this emergency,” explained Steidel Figueroa.

As a result, all hearings and scheduled matters in the courts of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico between Tuesday, March 31, 2020 and Friday, April 10, 2020 are hereby suspended. During this period only urgent matters will be entertained, such as hearings to determine probable cause for arrest (Criminal Procedure Rule 6), restraining orders, requests to relocate minors outside of the jurisdiction, other urgent matters regarding family and minors’ affairs, and involuntary admission orders under the Mental Health Code of Puerto Rico, among others.

The municipal courts of the thirteen judicial regions will receive the public from Monday through Friday between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. On weekends and holidays, the municipal courts of the San Juan, Bayamón, Ponce, and Mayagüez judicial regions will operate from 12:00 noon to 5:00 p.m. Should any situation occur outside the

established hours, the public may go to any police station, where the judge on call will be contacted to decide the matter.

In addition, Steidel Figueroa emphasized that urgent matters will continue to be heard through videoconferences. To this end, courtrooms throughout the judicial centers have been fitted to permit social distancing, to ensure the safety of the public and staff. Likewise, the Judicial Branch has coordinated with the Puerto Rico Police so at least one precinct in every judicial region may have available the videoconferencing system to address almost immediately the issues that may arise beyond working hours.

In addition, it was announced that the Supreme Court issued a resolution extending any court term expiring between March 16 and April 26, 2020 through Monday, April 27, 2020. Except for staff required to operate during this period, Judicial Branch staff must remain in their homes as a measure to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

Updated information regarding the operation of the courts is available at www.ramajudicial.pr and on Facebook, Twitter e Instagram at @ramajudicialpr.

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