

**IN THE APPELLATE COURT OF THE SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER 20-AO-001**

**COVID-19 Emergency Procedures in the Tribal Courts**

---

WHEREAS due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor of Florida has declared a state of emergency exists, the Surgeon General and State Health Officer have declared a public health emergency exists, and the Tribal Council of the Seminole Tribe of Florida declared an emergency closing effective Monday March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2020 until further notice. The Seminole Tribal Court must take steps to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the Court and court participants; and

WHEREAS mitigating the effects of COVID-19 is a high priority in the Tribal Court System; and

WHEREAS it is the intent of this order to temporarily suspend all civil trials, and to temporarily suspend procedural requirements and limitations that could hinder efforts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the courts and court participants; and

WHEREAS, a public health emergency currently exists in the Seminole Tribe of Florida which requires the Tribal Courts to mitigate its effects by adopting “social distancing” measures meant to reduce the increase in person-to-person transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19;

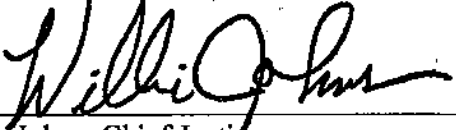
NOW THEREFORE, as Chief Justice of the Appellate Court of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, under the authority of STC-3.11, to issue all orders necessary to carry out the purpose of the Tribal Court Code, hereby

ORDER that:

1. The Director of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) shall continue ongoing efforts to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on the Courts and Court participants and to prepare to activate and implement continuity of operations (COOP) plans to address the public health emergency.
2. All civil trials are suspended during the period beginning Monday, March 16, 2020, until further notice as provided by subsequent order. However, a proceeding that has been commenced may proceed to completion if the presiding judge, determines that completion of the proceeding without delay is required by the interests of justice.
3. All rules of procedure, court orders, and opinions applicable to court proceedings that limit or prohibit the use of communication equipment for the conducting of proceedings by remote electronic means are suspended from the close of business on Friday, March 13, 2020, until further notice as provided by subsequent order.
4. During the duration of this order, the Director of the AOC along with the Clerk of Court are authorized to establish temporary procedures for the use, to the maximum extent feasible, of communication equipment for conducting proceedings by remote electronic means.

**DATE:** April 20, 2020

**IT IS SO ORDERED,**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Willie Johns, Chief Justice