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**WYOMING COURTS TO BEGIN CAUTIOUS RESTART OF JURY TRIALS
BEGINNING AUGUST 3, 2020**

The Chief Justice of the Wyoming Supreme Court, Michael K. Davis, today entered an Order extending to October 5, 2020 the Court's temporary plan to address Covid-19 health risks. The Order continues the loosening of the restrictions on in-person court proceedings, and in addition allows for the limited resumption of jury trials, in accordance with guidelines that set forth specific measures to keep jurors, court staff, and the public safe. Each judicial district will rely on these guidelines to adopt an Operating Plan that adapts to local circumstances such as available courthouse space and local rate of infection.

Chief Justice Davis stressed that "citizen participation in jury trials is a critical component of our democracy." However, he recognized that jury duty differs from other types of gatherings. "As the State of Wyoming begins to ease restrictions imposed to limit the spread of Covid-19, individuals may choose whether to go to a restaurant or engage in other activities that increase their exposure. They do not have a choice whether to appear when summoned for jury duty or subpoenaed to testify at trial; therefore, the Wyoming judiciary takes very seriously its responsibility to provide safe courthouses."

The District Court for the Sixth Judicial District conducted a pilot jury trial July 13-15, 2020, which went off smoothly thanks to a comprehensive plan formulated by the judges of the district and circuit courts in Gillette, which permitted them to conduct the jury trial while keeping court staff, jurors, parties, lawyers, and the public safe. "The constitutions of the United States and the State of Wyoming ensure the right to a jury trial," Judge Rumpke, who presided over the trial, said, "and in criminal cases, that trial must be speedy. We have to balance our constitutional duty with the need to keep the citizens who serve on juries safe." Chief Justice Davis cautioned that jury trials will not be resumed immediately in all districts, and when they are resumed, they will not be conducted at the same rate as before the Covid-19 shutdown. "Each jurisdiction differs in the court facilities available and the local rate of infection," Chief Justice Davis said. For example, some courtrooms are not big enough to allow for necessary social distancing, and juries may need to occupy a courtroom or other room for their deliberations because most jury rooms

are too small for social distancing. “The district and circuit courts will have to take this slowly and carefully to ensure that they do not contribute to the spread of the infection.”

The Wyoming Supreme Court ordered all but the most critical in-person court proceedings to be suspended back in March, a few days after Governor Gordon declared a state of emergency due to Covid-19. Since then, thanks to advanced technology, Wyoming courts have been able to conduct a large number of hearings via video, and most Wyoming courts have now loosened restrictions to resume in-person proceedings, subject to the familiar social-distancing and hygiene precautions. Jury trials present a more complex challenge. “Citizen participation in jury trials is a critical component of our democracy,” Judge Rumpke said. “It’s our goal to make that happen without putting anyone’s health at risk.”

The full order extending, as well as the original orders, can be found on the Wyoming Supreme Court’s website. <https://www.courts.state.wy.us/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/>