



## Supreme Court of Florida

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 6/3/2020

Craig Waters

Florida Supreme Court

(850) 414-7641

[publicinformation@flcourts.org](mailto:publicinformation@flcourts.org)

### **Five Florida trial-court circuits selected for remote civil jury trial pilot programs**

TALLAHASSEE – Five trial-court circuits across the state have been chosen to conduct a test of remote technology as a safer alternative to traditional in-person civil jury trials.

Locations for the pilot projects of civil jury trials are:

- Jacksonville’s [Fourth Judicial Circuit](#) comprising Clay, Duval, and Nassau counties.
- Daytona Beach’s [Seventh Judicial Circuit](#) comprising Flagler, St. Johns, Putnam, and Volusia Counties.
- Orlando’s [Ninth Judicial Circuit](#) comprising Orange and Osceola counties.
- Miami-Dade County’s [Eleventh Judicial Circuit](#).
- Fort Myers’s [Twentieth Judicial Circuit](#) comprising Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties.

The circuits were chosen by the [COVID-19 Workgroup](#) created by Chief Justice Charles T. Canady to advise him on court operations during the public health emergency.

Canady, on [March 13](#), suspended all jury trials around the state to protect the health of participants and the public from transmission of the coronavirus. The suspension has been extended through at least [July 2](#).

Many courts around the state are expanding pandemic operations this week by enforcing limitations on in-person contact, as the areas they serve meet public health criteria for more normalized activities. Pandemic precautions approved by Canady include use of remote “virtual” technology, personal protection equipment, physical distancing, and staggered schedules for court events.

Members of the Continuity Workgroup chose the five circuits based on their different approaches ranging from fully remote operations to combinations of remote and in-person activities. Among the criteria for selection were geographic diversity, differing levels of local infection concentrations, and technological capacity within the trial court.

Workgroup members hope to see which approaches bring the best results as measured by the response of prospective jurors. The first round of pilot programs is being confined to civil cases involving disputes among individuals rather than criminal cases. Criminal trials typically involve more complex issues of constitutional rights than civil trials do.

Chaired by Orlando-area Circuit [Judge Lisa Taylor Munyon](#), the Workgroup's mission includes examining the current status of all court proceedings statewide that have been affected by the pandemic.

The move toward remote "virtual" hearings is a major historical shift in state court operations, which have relied heavily on in-person proceedings in the 175 years since Florida became a state in 1845. Canady also has asked the Workgroup to make suggestions for remote procedures and other changes that can continue even after the pandemic is over, where beneficial to litigants and other justice stakeholders.

All state-court coronavirus emergency orders and advisories are linked on the Florida Supreme Court's website: <https://www.floridasupremecourt.org/Emergency>

###