

MAR 09 2021

JAMES N. HATTEN, Clerk
By:  Deputy Clerk

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA**

**IN RE: EMERGENCY AUTHORIZATION
OF VIDEO TELECONFERENCING AND
TELEPHONE CONFERENCING IN
CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS DUE TO THE
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**GENERAL ORDER 20-04
Fourth Amendment**

ORDER

On March 30, 2020, in response to the outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) within the Northern District of Georgia and relying on the authority of the CARES Act, H.R. 748, the Court issued General Order 20-04 authorizing the use of video and telephone conferencing in certain criminal proceedings. The CARES Act requires me to review this authorization every ninety days. Following the required reviews, I have entered three previous Amendments to the General Order, on June 28, 2020, September 26, 2020, and December 8, 2020, extending the authorization. As another ninety days will pass by March 25, 2021, I must again review this authorization and determine whether it should be extended.

While the number of COVID-19 infections and deaths in Georgia and the Northern District is declining from the recent very high levels experienced in January, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reflects that the average number of new COVID-19 cases per day in the State of Georgia still remains high with the seven-day moving average reported at over 2,800. This number is

higher than the average number of cases per day when the Court first entered General Order 20-04. The moving average for positive test rates also remains above 10%, indicating continued community spread of the disease.

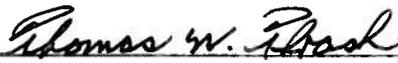
As in the Court's previous Amendments, counties within the Northern District, and particularly in the greater Atlanta metropolitan area, continue to report some of the highest numbers of new cases within the state, including Fulton, Gwinnett, Cobb, and DeKalb counties. The state's recent implementation of COVID-19 vaccinations should have a tremendous positive impact on combating and reducing the spread of the disease. However, Georgia remains in Phase 1a+ of its vaccination program; and only approximately 12% of Georgia's population has received at least one dose of the vaccine, and only 7.3% has received two doses. Given Georgia's current phase, it likely will be at least several weeks before vaccinations are available to the general public. There continues to be no known cure for COVID-19, and several variant strains of the disease have now been identified.

There has been no change to the President's declaration of a national emergency under the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq.) due to COVID-19 or to the findings of the Judicial Conference of the United States that emergency conditions due to this national emergency have materially affected and will materially affect the functioning of the federal courts generally.

Having reviewed the authorization contained in General Order 20-04 in light of the above facts, I find that General Order 20-04 should again be extended in order to facilitate the administration of justice while at the same time protecting the health and safety of parties, counsel, court staff, and the public.

Therefore, it is hereby **ORDERED** that General Order 20-04 is extended and shall be in effect until the earliest of the following: (1) the date that is 30 days after the date on which the national emergency declaration terminates; (2) the date on which the Judicial Conference of the United States finds that emergency conditions due to the national emergency declared by the President under the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. § 1601 et seq.) with respect to COVID-19 no longer materially affect the functioning of either the federal courts generally or this district; or (3) the Order is terminated by this Court.

SO ORDERED this 8th day of March 2021.



THOMAS W. THRASH, JR.
CHIEF UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE