

Notice Regarding Grand Jury Proceedings

During the current COVID-19 public health emergency, the Northern District of California has made all efforts to continue court operations remotely where permitted and, where not permitted, has performed court operations in person with the minimum personnel necessary. While many types of hearings may be held remotely, federal grand jury proceedings cannot be conducted remotely or virtually. Under the [CARES Act](#), enacted by Congress in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency, district courts are temporarily permitted to conduct certain enumerated criminal proceedings via teleconference and videoconference. However, these limited proceedings do not include grand jury proceedings. In addition, because grand jurors have an obligation of secrecy under the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure, remote grand jury proceedings would present an unacceptable risk to the grand jury's oath.

The court's decision to continue grand jury proceedings—on a significantly limited basis and following safety protocols recommended by public health experts—was made after extensive discussion by all Northern District of California judges. The court has determined that its duty to public safety can be appropriately balanced with its Constitutional duty to administer justice, without completely suspending grand jury proceedings. To that end, the court, in cooperation with the United States Attorney's Office, has significantly reduced the volume and length of grand jury proceedings, has relocated grand jury proceedings to larger facilities to allow greater social distancing, and has instituted various other [safety protocols](#) following the guidance of public health experts.

The Northern District of California extends its sincerest thanks to all grand jurors and alternates for their service, and for performing this incredibly important duty during this challenging time.