

**DISTRICT COURT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
DIVISIONS OF ST. CROIX and ST. THOMAS/ST. JOHN**

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| IN RE: |) | |
| |) | General Order |
| |) | |
| DISTRICT COURT OPERATIONS |) | |
| DURING THE COVID-19 |) | Miscellaneous No. 2020-0001 |
| OUTBREAK |) | |
| <hr style="border: 1px solid black;"/> |) | |

**FORTY-SIXTH ORDER CONCERNING OPERATIONS OF
THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
VIDEO AND TELECONFERENCES FOR CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS**

WHEREAS, on March 13, 2020, the President of the United States declared a national emergency under the National Emergencies Act (50 U.S.C. §§ 1601 *et seq.*) with respect to the coronavirus disease (“COVID-19”), which was extended by the President on February 18, 2022; and

WHEREAS, on March 27, 2020, Congress passed, and the President signed, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES Act”) authorizing the use of videoconferencing and teleconferencing—under certain circumstances and with the consent of the defendant after consultation with counsel—for various events in criminal cases during the course of the COVID-19 emergency, *see* CARES Act, H.R. 748, §§ 15002 *et seq.*; and

WHEREAS, on March 29, 2020, the Judicial Conference of the United States found, pursuant to the CARES Act, that emergency conditions due to the above-referenced national emergency declared by the President have materially affected and will materially affect the functioning of the federal courts generally; and

WHEREAS, beginning on April 9, 2020, and extended thus far through March 26, 2023, in the Court’s CARES Act Orders, the Chief Judge exercised the authority granted pursuant to § 15002(b)(1) of the CARES Act, to authorize, on the Chief Judge’s own motion, the use

of videoconferencing or teleconferencing for certain criminal proceedings under certain conditions; and

WHEREAS, although in the Court's Orders Concerning Operations of the District Court of the Virgin Islands During the COVID-19 Outbreak, last issued on December 26, 2022, the Court adjusted its operations as appropriate, the Court nonetheless recognized certain issues that counseled in favor of caution: the continuing danger and threat to public health and safety that COVID-19 and its variants pose; the unpredictability and uncertainty of the pandemic's impact in the Virgin Islands at any given time; the need for the continued implementation of precautionary and preventive measures; and the need for flexibility to adjust the Court's operations in light of the COVID-19 circumstances in the Territory; and

WHEREAS, in the Forty-Fifth Order—the thirteenth of the CARES Act Orders—the Chief Judge ordered that pursuant to § 15002(b)(3) of the CARES Act, the Forty-Fifth Order would remain in effect for 90 days, unless terminated earlier, and that if on the 90th day, the President's emergency declaration remained in effect, along with the Judicial Conference's finding that the emergency conditions will materially affect the functioning of the federal courts, the Chief Judge would review the authorization in the Forty-Fifth Order and determine whether it should be extended; and

WHEREAS, on this day, March 31, 2023, the President's emergency declaration and the Judicial Conference's finding remain in effect; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Judge, the undersigned continues to have the authority, pursuant to § 15002(b)(1) of the CARES Act, to authorize, on my own motion, the use of videoconferencing or teleconferencing for certain criminal proceedings under certain conditions; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Judge and pursuant to § 15002(b)(2) of the CARES Act, the undersigned specifically finds, on my own motion, that in this judicial district certain felony pleas under Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and certain felony sentencings under Rule 32 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure still cannot be conducted in person without seriously jeopardizing public health and safety, in view of the continuing impact and unpredictability of the pandemic as reflected in the Court's General Orders and most recently in the Court's Forty-Fifth Order; and

NOW THEREFORE, it is hereby

ORDERED that, pursuant to § 15002(b)(3) of the CARES Act, the Court's Forty-Fifth Order entered on December 26, 2022, is renewed and extended to the fullest extent permitted by law for 90 days from the date of this Order unless terminated earlier. Specifically, it is hereby

ORDERED that, pursuant to § 15002(b)(1) of the CARES Act, videoconferencing, or teleconferencing if videoconferencing is not reasonably available, is authorized for use for the following criminal proceedings, with the consent of the defendant, or the juvenile, after consultation with counsel:

- Detention hearings under Section 3142 of Title 18, United States Code;
- Initial appearances under Rule 5 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure;
- Preliminary hearings under Rule 5.1 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure;
- Waivers of indictment under Rule 7(b) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure;
- Arraignments under Rule 10 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure;
- Probation and supervised release revocation proceedings under Rule 32.1 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure;
- Pretrial release revocation proceedings under Section 3148 of Title 18, United States Code;
- Appearances under Rule 40 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure;
- Misdemeanor pleas and sentencings as described in Rule 43(b)(2) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure; and

- Proceedings under chapter 403 of Title 18, United States Code (commonly known as the “Federal Juvenile Delinquency Act”), except for contested transfer hearings and juvenile delinquency adjudication or trial proceedings;

and it is further

ORDERED that, pursuant to § 15002(b)(2) of the CARES Act, if a judge in a particular case finds for specific reasons that a felony plea or sentencing in that case cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice, the judge may, with the consent of the defendant after consultation with counsel, use videoconferencing, or teleconferencing if videoconferencing is not reasonably available, for the felony plea or sentencing in that case. Judges may also use this authority for equivalent events in juvenile cases as described in § 15002(b)(2)(B), with the consent of the juvenile after consultation with counsel; and it is further

ORDERED that, pursuant to § 15002(b)(3) of the CARES Act, if 90 days from the date of this Order, the President’s emergency declaration remains in effect, along with the Judicial Conference’s finding that the emergency conditions will materially affect the functioning of the federal courts, the Chief Judge shall review the authorization described in this Order and determine whether it shall be further extended. Such review will occur not less frequently than once every 90 days, until the last day of the covered emergency period or until the Chief Judge determines that the authorization is no longer warranted.

SO ORDERED.

Date: March 31, 2023

/s/ Robert A. Molloy _____
ROBERT A. MOLLOY
Chief Judge