

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT,  
FOR THE STATE OF FLORIDA**

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER: M-2020-17-B**

**AMENDED ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER REGARDING MARION COUNTY  
CLERK OF COURT HOURS OF OPERATION**

*(Amended as to close to public for non-essential proceedings)*

**WHEREAS**, Pursuant to Article V, section 2(d) of the Florida Constitution, and section 43.26, Florida Statutes, the Chief Judge of each judicial circuit is charged with the authority and the power to do everything necessary to promote the prompt and efficient administration of justice, and;

**WHEREAS**, Florida Rule of Judicial Administration 2.215(b)(3) states the Chief Judge “shall, considering available resources, ensure the efficient and proper administration of all courts within this circuit,” and;

**WHEREAS**, the Centers for Disease Control and the Florida Department of Health advise precautions due to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak specifically noting that the best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure to the virus by social distancing, and;

**WHEREAS**, on March 1, 2020, Governor Ron DeSantis declared a State of Emergency due to the COVID-19 outbreak, and on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, and;

**WHEREAS**, on March 11, 2020, Chief Justice Charles Canady issued Administrative Order No. AOSC20-12, *In Re: Response of the Florida State Courts System to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)*, requiring Chief Judges to continue ongoing planning and authorizing the use of mitigating measures to address the effects of COVID-19, and;

**WHEREAS**, on March 16, 2020, Chief Judge Daniel B. Merritt, Jr. issued Administrative Order No. A-2020-12, “*Administrative Order Regarding Court Closure Due to COVID-19 Pandemic*,” that closed all non-essential Courts through Friday, March 27, 2020, and;

**WHEREAS**, on March 17, 2020 Chief Justice Charles A. Canady issued Florida Supreme Court Administrative Order AOSC20-15 *In Re: COVID-19 Essential and Critical Trial Court Proceedings* wherein the Court identified specific essential court proceedings.

**WHEREAS**, on March 24, 2020, Chief Judge Daniel B. Merritt, Jr. issued Administrative Order No. A-2020-12-C, “*Amended Administrative Order Regarding Court Closure Due to COVID-19 Pandemic*,” that closed all non-essential Courts through Friday, April 17, 2020, and;

**WHEREAS**, based on the declaration of a state of emergency and the growing concern for health and safety of staff and the residents of Marion County, the Marion County Clerk of Court seeks to temporarily close the Office of the Marion County Clerk of Court to the public on a daily basis from 12:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., starting on Friday, March 20, 2020, and continuing until the Clerk is able to report that staffing resources permit the Clerk's Office to meet the expectations of the Court by reopening to the public during full, customary weekday hours.

**WHEREAS**, Florida Statute 43.27 provides, “The Clerk of Court may not close any office of the Clerk of Court during customary weekday hours without the consent of the Chief Judge of the Circuit.

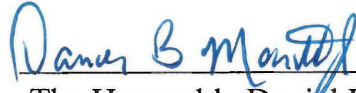
**IT IS THEREFORE,**

**ORDERED** and **ADJUDGED** as follows:

1. The Marion County Clerk has the consent of the Chief Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit to temporarily close the Office of the Marion County Clerk of Court to the public on a daily basis from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., starting at 5:00 p.m., Friday, April 3, 2020, and continuing until the Clerk is able to report that staffing resources permit the Clerk's Office to meet the expectations of the Court by reopening to the public during full, customary weekday hours.
2. The Marion County Clerk of Court will continue to provide support to the Fifth Circuit Judicial Branch pursuant to prior Florida Supreme Court and local Circuit wide administrative orders, as well as any other prior clarifying email directives from the Chief Judge. The Clerk shall remain accessible regarding essential hearing duties, activities, and responsibilities as may affect the conduct of judicial operations within the Fifth Circuit in accord herewith.
3. Additional orders modifying these measures will be issued as warranted by changing circumstances during the public health emergency.

*DBMJ*

**DONE and ORDERED** in Chambers at Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida  
this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of April, 2020.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel B. Merritt, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

---

The Honorable Daniel B. Merritt, Jr.  
Chief Judge  
Fifth Judicial Circuit