

NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT

MICHAEL G. HEAVICAN
CHIEF JUSTICE



P.O. BOX 98910
STATE CAPITOL BUILDING
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68509
(402) 471-3738

April 2, 2020

Matthew M. Kuhse
Omaha City Prosecutor
Hall of Justice, Suite 200
1701 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68183

Dear Mr. Kuhse:

We received the request of multiple Douglas County officials and entities to limit courthouse access for the next two weeks. You have our support to follow through with the plan, as outlined in your letter. Please keep us informed if you wish to make any modifications, changes, or extensions beyond the anticipated two weeks.

The Judicial Branch appreciates the support of all the signatories to this agreement in maintaining access to justice in Douglas County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael G. Heavican".

Michael G. Heavican

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Corey R. Steel".

Corey R. Steel
State Court Administrator



City of Omaha
Jean Stothert, Mayor

April 2, 2020

Law Department

Prosecution Division

Hall of Justice, Suite #200
1701 Farnam Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68183
(402) 444-5290

Matthew M. Kuhse
City Prosecutor

Chief Justice Michael G. Heavican
Nebraska Supreme Court
State Capitol, Room 2214
Lincoln, NE 68509

Re: Closure of the Douglas County Hall of Justice and Civic Center

Dear Chief Justice Heavican:

I have been tasked with preparing this written petition to you regarding further courthouse restrictions to public access at the Douglas County Hall of Justice and the courts located in the Civic Center. The sentiment and plan expressed herein represents the position of those individuals and their respective entities, who also appear on this petition.

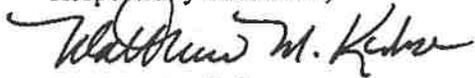
Due to the ongoing pandemic brought on by the COVID-19 virus, it has become necessary to restrict public access to the courts located in the Hall of Justice and Civic Center. The health of the employees in these buildings and the health of the public are of great concern to us all. However, we all recognize the need to keep the courts operational, given the many services the courts provide to the public. This proposed plan will accomplish both of these goals.

1. The Hall of Justice and the courts located in the Civic Center would have restricted public access. Employees would still have access, but they must present the required security credentials to enter the building.
2. Bond settings and arraignments for those individuals who have been arrested and are incarcerated would continue using the current videoconferencing system.
3. Other court matters would proceed using either telephonic or videoconferencing.
4. For those individuals who need access to the court (i.e. to request a protection order, protection order hearing, evictions, pay a fine, file a small claim, submit a legal pleading, etc.), they will be allowed entrance, escorted to the respective office and escorted out of the building.
5. The media will be allowed into the building but will be escorted by security and subject to the permission of the respective presiding judge.

The closing of the Hall of Justice and the courts located in the Civic Center, with certain conditions as stated above, will allow the courts to still function but allow for a reduction in people coming into either building. It will enable those offices in the building to continue functioning with a reduced staff, if necessary. This will also allow the Building Commission to conduct a thorough deep cleaning of the buildings. It is the intention to test this plan for two weeks with the understanding that an extension may be necessary as circumstances warrant. When this pandemic has abated and there is

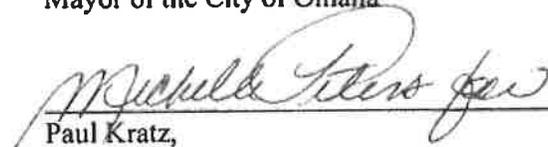
less need for directed health measures, these restrictions can be lifted after consulting with either the State Medical Director or the Douglas County Health Department.

Respectfully Submitted,

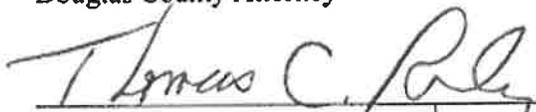

Matthew M. Kuhse
Omaha City Prosecutor

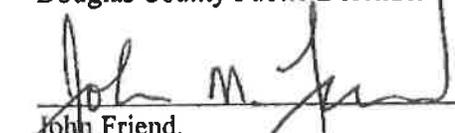
Approved as to form and content by:

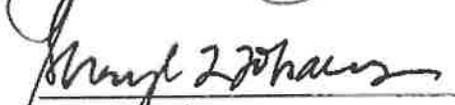

Jean Stothert,
Mayor of the City of Omaha


Paul Kratz,
City Attorney for the City of Omaha

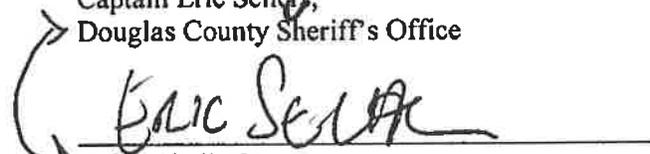

Don Kleine,
Douglas County Attorney

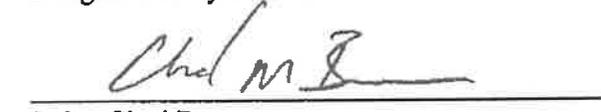

Tom Riley,
Douglas County Public Defender


John Friend,
Clerk of the District Court

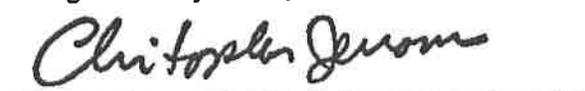

Judge Sheryl Lohaus,
Douglas County Court

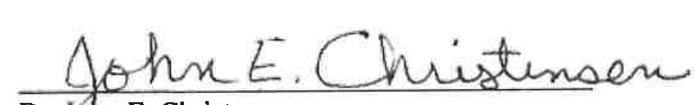

Captain Eric Sellers,
Douglas County Sheriff's Office


Judge Shelly Stratman,
Douglas County District Court


Judge Chad Brown,
Separate Juvenile Court of Douglas County


Clare Duda,
Douglas County Board, Chair


Chris Jerram,
Omaha City Council, President


Dr. John E. Christensen,
Building Commission, Chair


Paul Cohen,
Building Commission, Administrator

cc: Dr. Adi Pour, Douglas County Health Department
Corey Steel, State Court Administrator