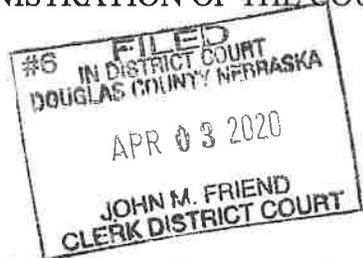


IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF DOUGLAS COUNTY, NEBRASKA

IN THE MATTER OF  
THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE COURT



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)

MS 20- 36

**ORDER LIMITING IN-PERSON  
COURT ACCESS IN RESPONSE TO  
COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

In consideration of the Order of the Douglas County Health Department issued on March 18, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Directed Health Measure Order 2020-008, and pursuant to the joint letter to the chief of the Nebraska Supreme Court and Chief Heavican’s reply letter (attached to this order), the following order is effective immediately:

The courtrooms of the District Court for Douglas County are hereby closed to all in-person hearings until April 20, 2020 or on further order of the court in consultation with the medical director of the Douglas County Health Department. Court hearings shall proceed by video and/or telephone conferencing.

The District Court shall remain open and accessible by video and teleconference. No non-essential proceedings should be held in-person. Emergency cases involving an individual’s personal liberty, safety, and family relations, including protection order hearings, shall be held by video and/or telephone conferencing unless a party does not have access to a computer or phone. Such cases shall be handled on a case by case basis, with the Court being advised that hearings should be reset to the first available date after April 20, 2020 if possible. All parties shall be instructed to follow strict Directed Health Measure orders.

All transports of prisoners from Douglas County Corrections to the Douglas County Courthouse are suspended until April 20, 2020 or on further order of the court.

**IT IS SO ORDERED**

DATED this 3rd day of April, 2020.

BY THE COURT:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shelly R. Stratman', written over a horizontal line.

Shelly R. Stratman  
Presiding Judge, Fourth District Court

# 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.

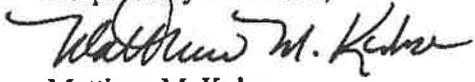
Due to the ongoing pandemic brought on by the COVID-19 virus, it has become necessary to restrict public access to the courts located in the Hall of Justice and Civic Center. The health of the employees in these buildings and the health of the public are of great concern to us all. However, we all recognize 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.

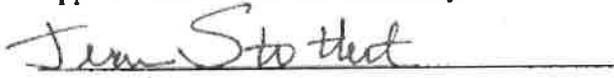
The closing of the Hall of Justice and the courts located in the Civic Center, with certain conditions as stated above, will allow the courts to still function but allow for a reduction in people coming into either building. It will enable those offices in the building to continue functioning with a 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

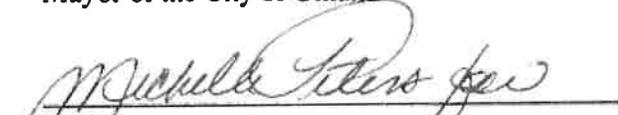
less need for directed health measures, these restrictions can be lifted after consulting with either the State Medical Director or the Douglas County Health Department.

Respectfully Submitted,

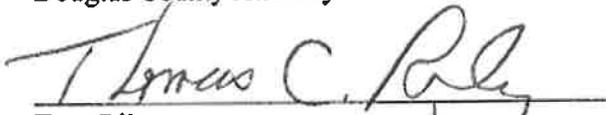
  
Matthew M. Kuhse  
Omaha City Prosecutor

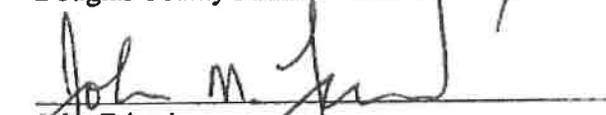
Approved as to form and content by:

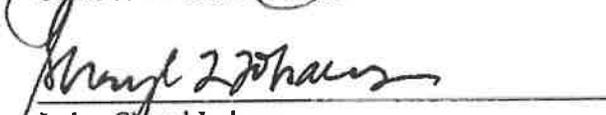
  
Jean Stothert,  
Mayor of the City of Omaha

  
Paul Kratz,  
City Attorney for the City of Omaha

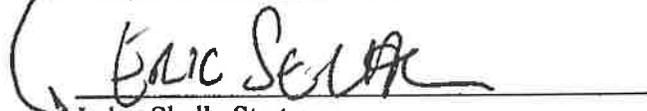
  
Don Kleine,  
Douglas County Attorney

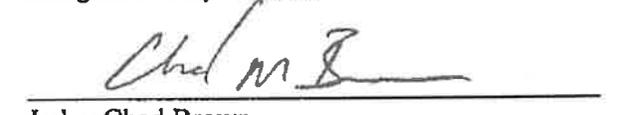
  
Tom Riley,  
Douglas County Public Defender

  
John Friend,  
Clerk of the District Court

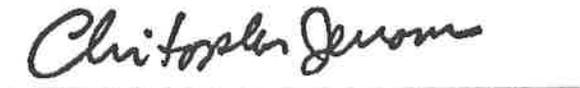
  
Judge Sheryl Lohaus,  
Douglas County Court

  
Captain Eric Sellers,  
Douglas County Sheriff's Office

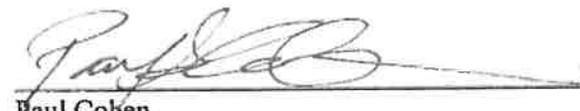
  
Judge Shelly Stratman,  
Douglas County District Court

  
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