

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF GEORGIA**

**COVID-19 NOTICE**

Due to the ongoing health crisis caused by COVID -19, the Supreme Court of Georgia entered its ORDER DECLARING STATEWIDE JUDICIAL EMERGENCY on March 14(Amended), and to clarify the impact of this judicial emergency to the local community, the judges of the Southern Judicial Circuit provide the following guidelines. Changes to these guidelines may be implemented as future circumstances require.

The following matters may be heard with the listed procedural guidelines:

1. **ADOPTION:** Parties and attorney only; no family, no minors and no spectators.
2. **CHILD CUSTODY ACTIONS INCLUDING DIVORCE AND MODIFICATION:** Verified pleadings and with any supporting affidavit(s) must be submitted to the presiding judge for review and approval for setting in chambers or conference call. No minors or witnesses are permitted.
3. **DIVORCE/NISI/TEMPORARY HEARING:** These matters will generally not be heard; however, verified pleadings and supporting affidavit(s) may be submitted to the presiding judge for consideration of emergency relief and possible scheduling.
4. **FINAL UNCONTESTED DIVORCE DECREE:** Attorneys may submit affidavit(s), final decree and statutorily required documents to judge's chambers for review and entry of order. Currently scheduled decrees will follow this procedure.
5. **EX PARTE DOMESTIC HEARINGS:** Attorney may submit verified pleadings, affidavit(s) and order to the presiding judge for consideration of emergency relief and scheduling. Only the attorney and party are permitted to appear in chambers.
6. **PROTECTIVE ORDERS:** The Haven or other statutorily authorized agency may submit pleading and order to a judge for consideration and scheduling.
7. **BONDS:** The Clerk will continue to prepare a bond calendar and the court will consider each matter in chambers at the jail conference room with attorneys and officers only. The presiding judge will schedule any required evidentiary hearing as needed.
8. **GUILTY PLEAS:** Guilty pleas will be taken from calendars of blocks of (10) cases or less. Calendars will be scheduled at 9:30am , 11:00am and 2:00pm. Only essential personnel are permitted. Family and spectators are strongly advised not to attend.
9. **PROBATION REVOCATION PETITIONS:** No technical petitions will be heard. Waiver should be used as appropriate. The Clerk/District Attorney will prepare the calendar and the court will conduct hearings at the jail courtroom. Family and spectators are strongly advised not to attend.

10. LOWNDES AND COLQUITT COUNTY ACCOUNTABILITY COURT: Court will be held in the normal course, but special instructions will be given to team members and participants as circumstances require.
11. GENERAL CIVIL/MOTIONS TO COMPEL/MOTIONS FOR SUMMARY JUDGMENT will not be heard unless prior approval by the presiding judge. Attorneys should submit the hearing request with cover letter concerning the matter under consideration.
12. CIVIL CALENDAR CALL will not be held.  
Civil jury trials are temporarily suspended.
13. CRIMINAL CALENDAR call will not be held.  
Criminal jury trials are temporarily suspended.
14. HABEAS CORPUS ACTIONS will not be held, absent special setting by the presiding judge.
15. MOTIONS FOR NEW TRIAL will not be held, absent special setting by presiding judge.

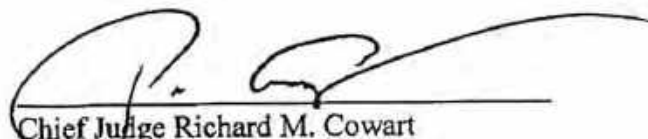
Please see the following resources for further information.

Supreme Court of Georgia  
<https://www.gasupreme.us/>

Southern Judicial Circuit  
[www.southernjudicialcircuit.com](http://www.southernjudicialcircuit.com)

Judicial Council of Georgia  
<https://georgiacourts.gov>

Notice so ordered, this 17<sup>th</sup> day of March, <sup>2020</sup>~~2019~~.



Chief Judge Richard M. Cowart  
Superior Courts, Southern Judicial Circuit

All Judges concur:  
James E. Hardy  
James G. Tunison, Jr.  
Brian A. McDaniel  
James L. Prine

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF BROOKS COUNTY  
SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF GEORGIA

FILED IN OFFICE

MAR 13 2020



CLERK OF SUPREME  
COURT OF GEORGIA

IN RE: Declaration of Judicial Emergency

Date: March 13, 2020

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**ORDER DECLARING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that a Judicial Emergency exists in Brooks County, Georgia affecting all courts such that there is a serious health emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D). *See* O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D) (providing that "Judicial Emergency" means "[s]uch other serious emergency").

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that the Judicial Emergency substantially endangers or infringes upon the normal functioning of the judicial system as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.

Therefore, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61, The Honorable Chief Judge Richard M. Cowart, of the Superior Court of Brooks County, Southern Judicial Circuit

DOES HEREBY ORDER AND DECLARE the existence of a Judicial Emergency in the Southern Judicial Circuit. The nature of this emergency is the continued transmission of Coronavirus/COVID-19 throughout Brooks County and the potential infection of those who are required to appear in our courts and interact with large groups due to jury service, including grand jury service, or other large, non-essential calendars.

Thus, the undersigned hereby makes this declaration of a judicial emergency affecting all courts and clerk's offices in Brooks County as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.



Accordingly, IT IS THE ORDER of the Court that no jurors or grand jurors shall report and no jury trials shall be held for a period of **thirty (30) days** from the date of the entry of this Order. Furthermore, no civil or non-essential matters shall be heard by the courts during this 30-day time period, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing. Parties or attorneys in any non-essential matters should contact the chambers of the judge assigned to their case if they have any questions and/or need to ensure their compliance with this Order.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-62, during the period of this Order, the Court hereby suspends, tolls, extends, and otherwise grants relief from: (1) a statute of limitation; (2) the time within to try a case for which a demand for speedy trial has been filed;

(3) the time within which to hold a commitment hearing; (4) the time within which to return a bill of indictment or an accusation or to bring a matter before a grand jury; and/or (5) such other legal proceedings as determined to be necessary, including calendars involving large numbers of litigants, lawyers, or other persons.

Should the state of emergency extend beyond the period indicated above or should the nature of the emergency otherwise require modification by the Court, the Court will make a determination of available alternative remedies for the conduct of court business, as necessary, and a corresponding Order will be entered and distributed in accordance with Georgia law.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-63:

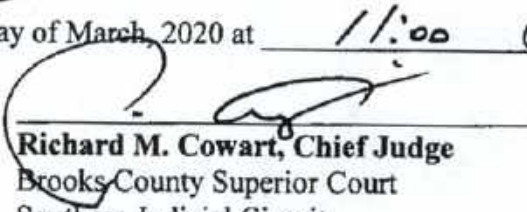
IT IS ORDERED that the Sheriff of Brooks County shall post this Order on his public notification site and in the courthouses;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve Chief Justice Harold D. Melton of the Supreme Court with a copy of this Order, such service to be accomplished via email to Tee Barnes, the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia, at **barnest@gasupreme.us**;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve a copy of the order on the judges and clerks of all courts sitting within the jurisdictions affected and on the clerks of the Georgia Court of Appeals and the Georgia Supreme Court, such service to be accomplished through reasonable means to assure expeditious receipt; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall give notice of the issuance of this Order to the affected parties, counsel for the affected parties, and the public.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. p.m.

  
Richard M. Cowart, Chief Judge  
Brooks County Superior Court  
Southern Judicial Circuit

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF COLQUITT COUNTY  
SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: Declaration of Judicial Emergency

Date: March 13, 2020

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FILED IN OFFICE

MAR 13 2020

  
CLERK OF SUPREME  
COURT OF GEORGIA

**ORDER DECLARING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that a Judicial Emergency exists in Colquitt County, Georgia affecting all courts such that there is a serious health emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D). *See* O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D) (providing that “Judicial Emergency” means “[s]uch other serious emergency”).

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that the Judicial Emergency substantially endangers or infringes upon the normal functioning of the judicial system as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.

Therefore, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61, The Honorable Chief Judge Richard M. Cowart, of the Superior Court of Colquitt County, Southern Judicial Circuit

DOES HEREBY ORDER AND DECLARE the existence of a Judicial Emergency in the Southern Judicial Circuit. The nature of this emergency is the continued transmission of Coronavirus/COVID-19 throughout Colquitt County and the potential infection of those who are required to appear in our courts and interact with large groups due to jury service, including grand jury service, or other large, non-essential calendars.

Thus, the undersigned hereby makes this declaration of a judicial emergency affecting all courts and clerk’s offices in Colquitt County as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.



Accordingly, IT IS THE ORDER of the Court that no jurors or grand jurors shall report and no jury trials shall be held for a period of **thirty (30) days** from the date of the entry of this Order. Furthermore, no civil or non-essential matters shall be heard by the courts during this 30-day time period, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing. Parties or attorneys in any non-essential matters should contact the chambers of the judge assigned to their case if they have any questions and/or need to ensure their compliance with this Order.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-62, during the period of this Order, the Court hereby suspends, tolls, extends, and otherwise grants relief from: (1) a statute of limitation; (2) the time within to try a case for which a demand for speedy trial has been filed;

(3) the time within which to hold a commitment hearing; (4) the time within which to return a bill of indictment or an accusation or to bring a matter before a grand jury; and/or (5) such other legal proceedings as determined to be necessary, including calendars involving large numbers of litigants, lawyers, or other persons.

Should the state of emergency extend beyond the period indicated above or should the nature of the emergency otherwise require modification by the Court, the Court will make a determination of available alternative remedies for the conduct of court business, as necessary, and a corresponding Order will be entered and distributed in accordance with Georgia law.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-63:

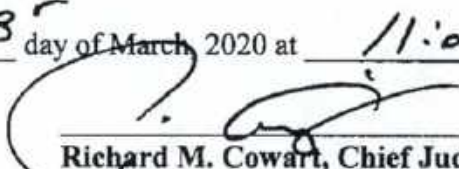
IT IS ORDERED that the Sheriff of Colquitt County shall post this Order on his public notification site and in the courthouses;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve Chief Justice Harold D. Melton of the Supreme Court with a copy of this Order, such service to be accomplished via email to Tee Barnes, the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia, at **barnest@gasupreme.us**;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve a copy of the order on the judges and clerks of all courts sitting within the jurisdictions affected and on the clerks of the Georgia Court of Appeals and the Georgia Supreme Court, such service to be accomplished through reasonable means to assure expeditious receipt; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall give notice of the issuance of this Order to the affected parties, counsel for the affected parties, and the public.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. p.m.

  
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Richard M. Cowart, Chief Judge  
Colquitt County Superior Court  
Southern Judicial Circuit



IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF ECHOLS COUNTY  
SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: Declaration of Judicial Emergency

Date: March 13, 2020

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FILED IN OFFICE

MAR 13 2020

CLERK OF SUPREME  
COURT OF GEORGIA

**ORDER DECLARING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that a Judicial Emergency exists in Echols County, Georgia affecting all courts such that there is a serious health emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D). *See* O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D) (providing that "Judicial Emergency" means "[s]uch other serious emergency").

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that the Judicial Emergency substantially endangers or infringes upon the normal functioning of the judicial system as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.

Therefore, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61, The Honorable Chief Judge Richard M. Cowart, of the Superior Court of Echols County, Southern Judicial Circuit

DOES HEREBY ORDER AND DECLARE the existence of a Judicial Emergency in the Southern Judicial Circuit. The nature of this emergency is the continued transmission of Coronavirus/COVID-19 throughout Echols County and the potential infection of those who are required to appear in our courts and interact with large groups due to jury service, including grand jury service, or other large, non-essential calendars.

Thus, the undersigned hereby makes this declaration of a judicial emergency affecting all courts and clerk's offices in Echols County as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.

Accordingly, IT IS THE ORDER of the Court that no jurors or grand jurors shall report and no jury trials shall be held for a period of thirty (30) days from the date of the entry of this Order. Furthermore, no civil or non-essential matters shall be heard by the courts during this 30-day time period, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing. Parties or attorneys in any non-essential matters should contact the chambers of the judge assigned to their case if they have any questions and/or need to ensure their compliance with this Order.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-62, during the period of this Order, the Court hereby suspends, tolls, extends, and otherwise grants relief from: (1) a statute of limitation; (2) the time within to try a case for which a demand for speedy trial has been filed;

(3) the time within which to hold a commitment hearing; (4) the time within which to return a bill of indictment or an accusation or to bring a matter before a grand jury; and/or (5) such other legal proceedings as determined to be necessary, including calendars involving large numbers of litigants, lawyers, or other persons.

Should the state of emergency extend beyond the period indicated above or should the nature of the emergency otherwise require modification by the Court, the Court will make a determination of available alternative remedies for the conduct of court business, as necessary, and a corresponding Order will be entered and distributed in accordance with Georgia law.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-63:

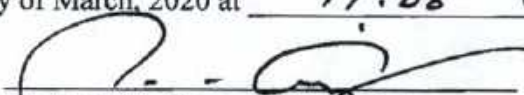
IT IS ORDERED that the Sheriff of Echols County shall post this Order on his public notification site and in the courthouses;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve Chief Justice Harold D. Melton of the Supreme Court with a copy of this Order, such service to be accomplished via email to Tee Barnes, the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia, at [barnest@gasupreme.us](mailto:barnest@gasupreme.us);

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve a copy of the order on the judges and clerks of all courts sitting within the jurisdictions affected and on the clerks of the Georgia Court of Appeals and the Georgia Supreme Court, such service to be accomplished through reasonable means to assure expeditious receipt; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall give notice of the issuance of this Order to the affected parties, counsel for the affected parties, and the public.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 at 11:00 a.m./p.m.

  
Richard M. Cowart, Chief Judge  
Echols County Superior Court  
Southern Judicial Circuit




IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF LOWNDES COUNTY  
SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF GEORGIA

IN RE: Declaration of Judicial Emergency

Date: March 13, 2020

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**FILED IN OFFICE**  
  
**MAR 13 2020**  
**CLERK OF SUPREME  
COURT OF GEORGIA**

**ORDER DECLARING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that a Judicial Emergency exists in Lowndes County, Georgia affecting all courts such that there is a serious health emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D). *See* O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D) (providing that “Judicial Emergency” means “[s]uch other serious emergency”).

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that the Judicial Emergency substantially endangers or infringes upon the normal functioning of the judicial system as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.

Therefore, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61, The Honorable Chief Judge Richard M. Cowart, of the Superior Court of Lowndes County, Southern Judicial Circuit

DOES HEREBY ORDER AND DECLARE the existence of a Judicial Emergency in the Southern Judicial Circuit. The nature of this emergency is the continued transmission of Coronavirus/COVID-19 throughout Lowndes County and the potential infection of those who are required to appear in our courts and interact with large groups due to jury service, including grand jury service, or other large, non-essential calendars.

Thus, the undersigned hereby makes this declaration of a judicial emergency affecting all courts and clerk’s offices in Lowndes County as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.

Accordingly, IT IS THE ORDER of the Court that no jurors or grand jurors shall report and no jury trials shall be held for a period of thirty (30) days from the date of the entry of this Order. Furthermore, no civil or non-essential matters shall be heard by the courts during this 30-day time period, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing. Parties or attorneys in any non-essential matters should contact the chambers of the judge assigned to their case if they have any questions and/or need to ensure their compliance with this Order.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-62, during the period of this Order, the Court hereby suspends, tolls, extends, and otherwise grants relief from: (1) a statute of limitation; (2) the time within to try a case for which a demand for speedy trial has been filed;

(3) the time within which to hold a commitment hearing; (4) the time within which to return a bill of indictment or an accusation or to bring a matter before a grand jury; and/or (5) such other legal proceedings as determined to be necessary, including calendars involving large numbers of litigants, lawyers, or other persons.

Should the state of emergency extend beyond the period indicated above or should the nature of the emergency otherwise require modification by the Court, the Court will make a determination of available alternative remedies for the conduct of court business, as necessary, and a corresponding Order will be entered and distributed in accordance with Georgia law.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-63:

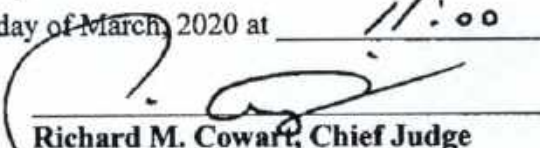
IT IS ORDERED that the Sheriff of Lowndes County shall post this Order on his public notification site and in the courthouses;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve Chief Justice Harold D. Melton of the Supreme Court with a copy of this Order, such service to be accomplished via email to Tee Barnes, the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia, at [barnest@gasupreme.us](mailto:barnest@gasupreme.us);

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve a copy of the order on the judges and clerks of all courts sitting within the jurisdictions affected and on the clerks of the Georgia Court of Appeals and the Georgia Supreme Court, such service to be accomplished through reasonable means to assure expeditious receipt; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall give notice of the issuance of this Order to the affected parties, counsel for the affected parties, and the public.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 13<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2020 at 11:00 a.m. / p.m.

  
Richard M. Cowart, Chief Judge  
Lowndes County Superior Court  
Southern Judicial Circuit



IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THOMAS COUNTY  
SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF GEORGIA

FILED IN OFFICE  
MAR 13 2020

CLERK OF SUPREME  
COURT OF GEORGIA

IN RE: Declaration of Judicial Emergency

Date: March 13, 2020

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**ORDER DECLARING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY**

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that a Judicial Emergency exists in Thomas County, Georgia affecting all courts such that there is a serious health emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D). *See* O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D) (providing that "Judicial Emergency" means "[s]uch other serious emergency").

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that the Judicial Emergency substantially endangers or infringes upon the normal functioning of the judicial system as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.

Therefore, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61, The Honorable Chief Judge Richard M. Cowart, of the Superior Court of Thomas County, Southern Judicial Circuit

DOES HEREBY ORDER AND DECLARE the existence of a Judicial Emergency in the Southern Judicial Circuit. The nature of this emergency is the continued transmission of Coronavirus/COVID-19 throughout Thomas County and the potential infection of those who are required to appear in our courts and interact with large groups due to jury service, including grand jury service, or other large, non-essential calendars.

Thus, the undersigned hereby makes this declaration of a judicial emergency affecting all courts and clerk's offices in Thomas County as it relates to jury service, including grand jury service, and any non-essential matters, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing.

Accordingly, IT IS THE ORDER of the Court that no jurors or grand jurors shall report and no jury trials shall be held for a period of thirty (30) days from the date of the entry of this Order. Furthermore, no civil or non-essential matters shall be heard by the courts during this 30-day time period, unless they can be conducted via video or teleconferencing. Parties or attorneys in any non-essential matters should contact the chambers of the judge assigned to their case if they have any questions and/or need to ensure their compliance with this Order.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-62, during the period of this Order, the Court hereby suspends, tolls, extends, and otherwise grants relief from: (1) a statute of limitation; (2) the time within to try a case for which a demand for speedy trial has been filed;

(3) the time within which to hold a commitment hearing; (4) the time within which to return a bill of indictment or an accusation or to bring a matter before a grand jury; and/or (5) such other legal proceedings as determined to be necessary, including calendars involving large numbers of litigants, lawyers, or other persons.

Should the state of emergency extend beyond the period indicated above or should the nature of the emergency otherwise require modification by the Court, the Court will make a determination of available alternative remedies for the conduct of court business, as necessary, and a corresponding Order will be entered and distributed in accordance with Georgia law.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-63:

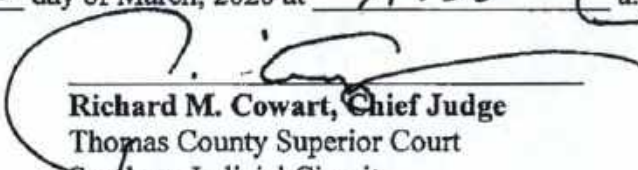
IT IS ORDERED that the Sheriff of Thomas County shall post this Order on his public notification site and in the courthouses;

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve Chief Justice Harold D. Melton of the Supreme Court with a copy of this Order, such service to be accomplished via email to Tee Barnes, the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia, at [barnest@gasupreme.us](mailto:barnest@gasupreme.us);

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve a copy of the order on the judges and clerks of all courts sitting within the jurisdictions affected and on the clerks of the Georgia Court of Appeals and the Georgia Supreme Court, such service to be accomplished through reasonable means to assure expeditious receipt; and

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall give notice of the issuance of this Order to the affected parties, counsel for the affected parties, and the public.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 13 day of March, 2020 at 11:00 a.m./p.m.



Richard M. Cowart, Chief Judge  
Thomas County Superior Court  
Southern Judicial Circuit