

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF WILKES COUNTY  
TOOMBS JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
STATE OF GEORGIA

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ORDER DECLARING JUDICIAL EMERGENCY

WHEREAS, the Governor of Georgia on March 13, 2020 declared a Public Health State of Emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-51 and the Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court on October 10, 2020 issued a Seventh Order Extending Declaration of Statewide Judicial Emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61;

WHEREAS, the District Attorney of the Toombs Judicial Circuit requested that a grand jury be empaneled for Wilkes County;

WHEREAS, this court entered an Order on September 23, 2020 for the convening of the grand jury for November 12-13;

WHEREAS, summons were sent to prospective jurors by certified mail, return receipt requested on the September 24, 2020, notifying them of the need to convene for grand jury proceedings on November 12-13;

WHEREAS, the prospective jurors were informed of the social distancing requirements set forth in this order;

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that a Judicial Emergency exists in Wilkes County, and affects potential grand jury proceedings such that there is a serious health emergency pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60(2)(D);

WHEREAS, IT HAS BEEN DETERMINED that the Wilkes County Courthouse will not

be able to provide a space that will permit potential jurors and court staff to adequately maintain social distancing of at least six feet, and it is necessary, pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-61(c), to designate another facility which is reasonably accessible and appropriate for the conduct of court business, and to adequately social distance for the convening of the grand jury;

WHEREAS, the City of Washington has agreed to lease the Edward B. Pope Conference Center to the governing authority of Wilkes County for the exclusive use of the Wilkes County Grand Jury for November 12-13;

IT IS HEREBY ORDERED that the August 2020 Term of the Wilkes County Grand Jury shall convene on November 12-13, 2020 at the Edward B. Pope Conference Center located at 48 Lexington Ave., Washington, GA 30673. The center shall be sanitized in a manner adhering to Centers for Disease Control guidelines before individuals are permitted to enter the building each day of grand jury proceedings.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that arrival times for potential grand jurors shall be staggered to accommodate social distancing, and grand jury proceedings shall be held in the main ballroom in order to maintain social distancing of at least six feet. All persons will be required to wear a mask or face covering over their noses and mouths throughout the proceedings, and a mask will be provided for those who arrive without a mask. All persons entering the building shall have their temperature checked and will be asked appropriate questions regarding potential exposure to COVID-19. Hand sanitizer will be provided. The witness chair and desk shall be sanitized between witness testimony.

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 38-3-63:

IT IS ORDERED that the Sheriff of Wilkes County shall post this Order in the courthouse and on the entrance door at the Edward B. Pope Conference Center.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve Chief Justice Harold D. Melton of the Supreme Court of Georgia with a copy of this Order, such

service to be accomplished via email to Therese S. Barnes, the Clerk of the Supreme Court of Georgia, at [barnest@gasupreme.us](mailto:barnest@gasupreme.us).

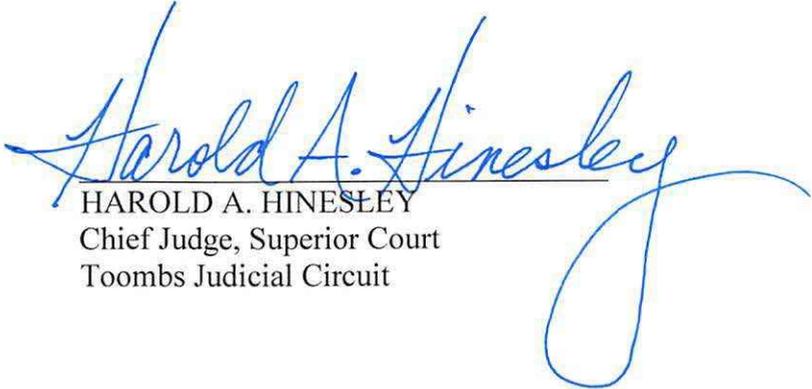
IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the undersigned shall immediately notify and serve a copy of this Order on the Wilkes County Clerk of Superior Court and on the clerks of the Georgia Court of Appeals and the Georgia Supreme Court, such service to be accomplished through reasonable means to assure expeditious receipt.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Wilkes County Clerk of Superior Court shall give necessary notice to the summoned jurors of the move to the Edward B. Pope Conference Center for convening the grand jury, such notice to include but not be limited to posting on the official Wilkes County Clerk of Superior Court Facebook Page.

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.

SO ORDERED this 4<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2020, in Wilkes County, Georgia.

This Judicial Emergency Order shall terminate on November 30, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. unless otherwise extended.

  
HAROLD A. HINESLEY  
Chief Judge, Superior Court  
Toombs Judicial Circuit