



**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA**

**IN RE:)
CRIMINAL CASE OPERATIONS)
DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY)
COVID-19)**

STANDING ORDER 15

Congress has passed legislation authorizing the use of video and telephone conferencing, under certain circumstances and with the consent of the defendant, for various criminal case events during the course of the COVID-19 emergency. *See* The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act, H.R. 748 (“CARES Act”). The Judicial Conference of the United States has also found that emergency conditions due to the national emergency declared by the President have affected and will materially affect the functioning of the federal courts generally.

As Chief Judge, and pursuant to Section 15002(b)(1) of the CARES Act, I hereby authorize the use of video conferencing, or telephone conferencing if video conferencing is not reasonably available, for all events listed in Section 15002(b) of the legislation.

Pursuant to Section 15002(b)(2), I further specifically find that felony pleas under Rule 11 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure and felony sentencings under Rule 32 of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure cannot be conducted in person in this district without seriously jeopardizing public health and safety. As a result, if a judge in an individual case finds, for specific reasons, that a felony plea or sentencing in that case cannot be further delayed without serious harm to the interests of justice, the judge may, with the consent of the defendant after consultation with counsel, use video conferencing, or teleconferencing if video conferencing is not reasonably available, for the felony plea or sentencing in that case. Judges may also use this authority for equivalent events in juvenile cases as described in Section 15002(b)(2)(B).

Pursuant to Section 15002(b)(3) of the CARES Act, this authorization will remain in effect for 90 days, unless terminated earlier. If emergency conditions continue to exist 90 days from the entry of this order, this authorization will be reviewed and a determination made whether to extend it.

SO ORDERED.

This the 30th day of March, 2020.

 /s/ Thomas D. Schroeder
Thomas D. Schroeder
Chief United States District Judge