

Bankruptcy Practitioners in the Middle District of Georgia,

Subject: Middle District of Georgia Bankruptcy Court Response to COVID-19  
Pandemic (2<sup>nd</sup> Announcement)

UPDATED COURTHOUSE ENTRY GUIDANCE Entry guidance to federal courthouses in the Middle District of Georgia have been updated since our March 12 announcement. The new guidance states that admission will be barred for anyone who:

- Anyone who has been to China, Iran, South Korea, and **all European countries** within the 14 days immediately preceding attempted access to the courthouse;
- Anyone who has **been on a cruise ship within the 14 days** immediately preceding attempted access to the courthouse;
- Anyone who has been asked to self-quarantine by any healthcare provider or who lives with someone who has been asked to self-quarantine;
- Anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.

If any of the above criteria apply to someone entering court facilities, the individual will be given an information sheet with options on how to file papers with the court. For attorneys to whom this guidance applies, please contact the courtroom deputy for any hearing you are required to attend in order to make alternate appearance arrangements.

COURT STAFF FULL TIME TELEWORK The Court has implemented its “Continuity of Operations Plan” (COOP) for this pandemic crisis. Thus, we have ordered all employees who are not required to report for duty to telework until further notice. We will maintain minimum staffing in order to comply with appropriate internal controls and other mandatory requirements. All employees working in a telework status, for the most part, will work regular duty hours during the 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. time frame. If you are unable to reach a particular case manager or other staff, please contact the Court at 478-749-3506 in Macon or 706-649-7837 in Columbus and ask for a supervisor

CONTINUED SECTION 341 MEETINGS The United States Trustee Program issued a Notice of Continued 341 Meetings in the Middle District of Georgia on March 17 which applies to all in-person Chapter 7, 12, and 13 section 341 hearings scheduled through April 10, 2020. These meetings will be continued until a later date, to be determined. Administrative Order #124 can be found on our court's website and provides details on the continuance of 341 meetings.

EXTENDED DEADLINES The Court has entered an order extending certain deadlines related to the continuance of section 341 meetings. Administrative Order #125 can be found on our court's website and provides details on extension of deadlines.

TELEPHONIC HEARINGS The Court has entered an order prohibiting in-person hearings and requiring the mandatory use of telephonic hearings during the period March 18 – April 15. Administrative Order #126 can be found on our court's website and provides details on how to enter a telephonic hearing.

ATHENS AND VALDOSTA COURT MARCH 24 – 26 Judge Smith and Judge Laney have decided to continue cases currently scheduled for March 24 – 26 in Athens and Valdosta. Parties scheduled to appear will be contacted and given additional guidance on when and how cases will be heard (whether they will be continued to a later date and/or whether and when they will be heard telephonically or by some other method. Administrative Order #127 can be found on our website giving details on Athens continuances. Administrative Order #128 will be posted on March 19 and will provide details on Valdosta continuances.

USE OF DIGITAL SIGNATURES The Court has entered an order allowing attorneys to temporarily use digital signatures for those petitions, pleadings, documents, or other papers requiring an original signature in accordance with LBR 5005-4 in order to reduce the amount of in-person contact for attorneys. Administrative Order #129 can be found on our Court's website and provides additional information.