



State of Tennessee

TWENTIETH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
607 METROPOLITAN COURTHOUSE
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37201
(615) 862-5910
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MEMORANDUM

TO: PRACTITIONERS AND LITIGANTS OF 4TH CIRCUIT COURT
RE: TEMPORARY PLAN FOR 4TH CIRCUIT COURT CASES
DATE: SEPTEMBER 8, 2022

We are still saddened and in shock of the untimely death of our judge, leader and dear friend. We recognize it will take time to process such a loss for us all as a whole. While it is taking us time to navigate our way, we know there are many questions to be answered about our temporary plan moving forward. As such, we have set forth details below regarding court matters and procedures through December 31, 2022 or until such time a successor judge is appointed, whichever occurs first.

First, we are happy to announce that retired Judge Muriel Robinson has been appointed by Chief Justice Page to serve as Special Judge. Judge Robinson has already been in the office and is ready to hear cases beginning Monday, September 12, 2022. For those of you who are unfamiliar with Judge Robinson, she is Judge Smith's predecessor. She was on the bench of 4th Circuit Court for 27 years. There may be times other judges in the courthouse sit by interchange, but Judge Robinson will hear the majority of cases during this transition period and until such time a successor judge is appointed by the governor.

The following is our plan through December 31, 2022 or until such time a successor judge is appointed, whichever occurs first:

I. Upcoming Dockets

Beginning Monday, September 12th, all reoccurring weekly dockets will resume. Our dockets will be closed on the following dates:

- October 25th-28th
- November 7th -11th
- November 24th-25th
- December 21st-January 2nd

Even though there are no dockets and/or the office will be closed on the above days, we will still monitor our inboxes for the filings of emergency matters.

II. Orders of Protection

Orders of Protection will continue to be heard on Mondays and Tuesdays of every week unless a day falls on a Metro Holiday. They will continue to be heard by Special Master Dana Ballinger in Courtroom 510 on the 5th floor of the courthouse. The appeal process will continue and appeals of 4th Circuit Court cases will be heard by Special Judge Muriel Robinson on Thursday dockets.

III. Contested Cases

- a. **Trials that have already commenced:** We have a few cases that have commenced trials but have not concluded. We will contact the attorneys for these cases personally to advise of next steps. In general, you will need to order a transcript of the trial proceedings thus far. Absent emergency requests, the case will be put on hold until such time as the successor judge is appointed. Any dates that are currently scheduled will be removed from the trial docket. The judge that ultimately concludes the case will do so under TRCP 63.
- b. **Trials calendared for first setting:** If you have a trial and/or Judicial Settlement Conference that has been calendared for an October, November or December date, it will go forward UNLESS, it is a continuation from a prior hearing. Special Master Stephanie Williams will continue to conduct the Judicial Settlement Conferences and Special Judge Muriel Robinson will hear those cases that proceed to trial. Additionally, a court reporter is required for all contested trials.
- c. **Granted Motions to Set:** If you have a Motion to Set that was granted but have not secured your trial and/or Judicial Settlement Conference dates, please send an email to: stephaniewilliams@jnsnashville.gov that specifies the case name, docket number and parameters given for the trial (i.e. the number of hours for each side, number of days, etc.). We will review this information and follow-up with you accordingly.
- d. **Pending Motions to Set:** If you have a Motion to Set pending or are ready to set a contested case and have not yet filed your motion to set, we ask that these requests be postponed until such time the trial calendar opens for March 2023 and beyond.

IV. Cases Under Advisement

We have a few cases where all proof has been concluded and they are under advisement. We will contact the attorneys for these cases personally to advise of next steps. In general, you will need to order a transcript of the trial proceedings. The judge that is ultimately assigned the case will do so under TRCP 63. Currently we do not have a timeline for a final disposition for these cases.

V. **Pending Orders** (*i.e. orders from motions, show cause hearings, uncontested and default divorces, uncontested and default adoptions, etc.*)

- a. If you had a hearing in front of Judge Smith that was concluded, he ruled on it and an order from the same has not yet been entered, Special Judge Muriel Robinson will review the record and order, as provided for under TRCP 63. We have what we need in the office to provide Judge Robinson with the records she will need to comply with TRCP 63.

Please understand this may take a little longer than normal processing but we are working diligently to complete the same in an efficient manner. If you have already submitted your order, we will make necessary changes on the signature line. For any future orders to be submitted, please be sure to include a blank for the date and a signature line with the designation of Special Judge Muriel Robinson as signatory.

- b. Orders to Set, Agreed Orders and Requests for Emergency Ex-Parte relief will be processed as normal. Please be sure to include a date and blank signature line on all of these orders as various judges will assist us in entering the same by interchange.

We realize we may have missed some things, so please call our office to inquire about anything else or to clarify any matters set forth above. Thank you for your patience and understanding as we navigate these unchartered and difficult waters.

Judge Muriel Robinson
Special Judge

Ronnell Griffin, David Martin, Dakota Vermillion, Stephanie Williams and Brenda Womack
4th Circuit Court Staff