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8 **UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT**
9 **CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

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11 **IN RE: PROCEDURES FOR**
12 **PHASED REOPENING DURING**
13 **COVID-19 PUBLIC EMERGENCY**

GENERAL ORDER 20-05

14 Upon consideration of the continuation of the Continuity of Operations Plan
15 (“COOP”) implemented on March 18, 2020, in response to the ongoing COVID-19
16 pandemic, and to clarify the operations of the United States Bankruptcy Court in light of
17 the United States District Court General Order 20-09, entered on August 6, 2020,

18 **IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** as follows:

- 19 1. Intake Areas of Bankruptcy Court May Open. All Intake areas of the United
20 States Bankruptcy Court will continue to be open to accept in-person filings in
21 light of the difficulty many self-represented litigants have in accessing
22 electronic filings and the increasing economic difficulties faced by many
23 during this pandemic.
- 24 a. Face Coverings. Anyone not wearing a face covering without
25 an approved medical exemption or anyone not observing posted
26 social distancing rules may be refused service.
- 27 b. Public Computers and Electronic Kiosks. At the discretion of the Clerk
28 of Court, public computers and electronic kiosks may be disabled

1 until methods can be developed to reduce any spread of infection
2 through their use.

3 c. Cash Payments. Cash will not be accepted for filing or copying fees
4 unless an exception is made by the Clerk of Court.

5 2. In-Person Hearings. As physical access to the United States Bankruptcy
6 Court continues to be permitted where the assigned judge has determined
7 that remote hearings are not possible, individual judges assigned to cases
8 may hold matters in person in the courtroom or continue to hear matters
9 remotely through telephonic or by video service.

10 a. Remote Access. Through December 31, 2020, remote access to
11 all non-evidentiary hearings will be permitted, even where in-person
12 hearings are held.

13 b. Evidentiary Hearings and Trials. The requirement to appear in person
14 or remotely for evidentiary hearings and trials will be determined on
15 a case-by-case basis by the assigned judge. Specific concerns should
16 be brought to the attention of the assigned judge.

17 c. Face Coverings. Unless the person has a medical exemption,
18 face coverings are required in public areas and also when entering
19 a courtroom. The presiding judge will determine whether face
20 coverings may be removed in the courtroom.

21 3. Self-Represented Filings. Individuals filing bankruptcy without an attorney
22 may file in person, by mail, or through the court's Electronic Self-
23 Representation module. The rules for such filings are posted on the court's
24 website. (<https://www.cacb.uscourts.gov/filing-without-an-attorney>)

25 4. Mediations. Mediations may resume and are in the discretion of the mediator
26 as to whether to proceed in person or remotely.

27 5. Judges' or Courtesy Copies. Except for documents over 25 pages, including
28 exhibits, the requirement to deliver judges' copies of documents to chambers

1 (LBR 5005-2(d)) continues to be temporarily suspended – including delivery
2 via U.S. mail, personal delivery, or any other means. Documents over
3 25 pages should still be provided unless the judge’s specific updated
4 instructions have waived that requirement. Parties are reminded that
5 the judge and chambers’ staff do not receive electronic notices of filings,
6 and therefore, (a) for documents that are filed late, and (b) for matters that
7 are either (i) not set for hearing, or (ii) not the subject of an electronically
8 uploaded order (LOU), parties must contact the chambers of the presiding
9 judge and advise chambers of the filing.

10 6. Signatures. Local Bankruptcy Rule 9011-1 does not require in-person contact
11 as it permits an attorney to receive a signature page by electronic means.
12 Nothing in the rule precludes the filing of a signature page that has been
13 received by facsimile, pdf, text or photo. This signature can be filed
14 separately in whatever format is reasonably possible so that there is a clear
15 indication that the signor has read and is signing the actual document filed.

16 a. In light of the difficulty of obtaining any paper files during
17 this emergency, the requirement of LBR 9011-1(d) to maintain
18 a wet signature for 5 years is temporarily suspended and the attorney
19 should maintain the electronic transmission of the client to file
20 the document in whatever format is reasonable at this time.

21 b. If there is a situation where a client cannot transmit a signature
22 electronically either due to lack of required technology or internet
23 access, etc., the attorney should so explain the circumstances
24 with the filing, verify that permission was obtained from the client
25 to sign the document on their behalf, and obtain the signature
26 as soon as possible after the filing through another means.

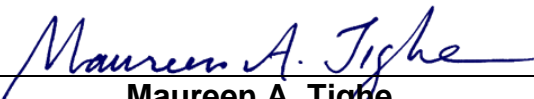
27 7. Phased Reopening Plans. The court’s COOP will remain in place and
28 be modified gradually as necessary. Details of these modifications will be

1 posted on the court's website and communicated to staff as they are
2 implemented.

- 3 a. Individual Courthouses May Be Closed. Should local suspected
4 or confirmed cases of COVID-19 or local, state and federal guidance
5 change, individual bankruptcy court divisions may be closed without
6 further order in the discretion of the Chief Bankruptcy Judge
7 after appropriate consultation. Signs will be posted on the doors
8 of the division affected and directions provided for obtaining needed
9 court services. No further orders will be issued for such temporary
10 closures made pursuant to the ongoing COOP.

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12 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

13 DATED: August 6, 2020

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16 **Maureen A. Tighe**
17 Chief Judge, United States Bankruptcy Court