

THE SUPREME COURT OF MONTANA

MIKE McGRATH
CHIEF JUSTICE



JUSTICE BUILDING
215 NORTH SANDERS
PO BOX 203001
HELENA, MONTANA 59620-3001
TELEPHONE (406) 444-5490
FAX (406) 444-3274

March 20, 2020

Montana Courts of Limited Jurisdiction Judges

Dear Judges:

On behalf of the Supreme Court, I want you to know we appreciate that you serve as the front line of the judicial system. And, of course, the decisions you make have a substantial impact on the jail population throughout our state.

Because of the high risk of transmittal of COVID-19, not only to prisoners within correctional facilities but staff and defense attorneys as well, we ask that you review your jail rosters and release, without bond, as many prisoners as you are able, especially those being held for non-violent offenses.

At this time, there does not appear to be an outbreak of COVID-19 in any of Montana's correctional facilities. However, it is only a matter of time. Due to the confines of these facilities, it will be virtually impossible to contain the spread of the virus.

We ask that you follow the provisions of the Memorandum sent out March 17. Conducting as many hearings as you can using video and other remote technology will curtail the risk of exposure and transmission of the virus.

Thank you again for your service to the State and your communities. This is a challenging time, and we are all having to make some difficult decisions to keep our communities healthy.

Good luck and take care of yourselves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike McGrath". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Mike McGrath
Chief Justice