

**IN THE SUPERIOR COURTS OF THE SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT**

**STATE OF GEORGIA**

IN RE: §  
Declaration of Judicial Operations §  
Emergency Order §

**ORDER**

The undersigned Chief Judge of Superior Courts for the Southern Judicial Circuit of Georgia, acting under the authority of the O.C.G.A. § 38-3-60 et seq., hereby declares a judicial emergency in all the Counties of the Southern Judicial Circuit. This emergency is due to Hurricane Helene which is expected to affect this judicial circuit from approximately Thursday, September 26, 2024 through Friday, September 27, 2024. The undersigned makes this declaration in conformance with the Order by Governor Brian Kemp who has issued a state of emergency in the State of Georgia, including all counties in the Southern Judicial Circuit.

The undersigned Chief Judge having consulted with all of the acting Superior Court Judges within the Circuit, all are in agreement that access to the courthouses of the Southern Judicial Circuit is impossible or impractical during this judicial emergency.

**THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED**, that all the court business within the Southern Judicial Circuit, including Superior, Magistrate, Probate, and Juvenile Courts, be closed for business effective 8:00 A.M. on Thursday, September 26, 2024 and extends through 11:59 P.M. on Friday, September 27, 2024. Thereafter, the above-named Court in the Southern Judicial Circuit shall reopen for business on Monday, September 30, 2024, at the regular time.

For the periods of the judicial emergency cited above, the undersigned Chief Judge hereby suspends, tolls, extends or otherwise grants relief from all deadlines or other time scheduled or filing requirements imposed by otherwise applicable statutes, rules, regulations, or court orders, whether in civil or criminal cases or administrative matters, including, but not limited to:

1. A statute of limitation;
2. The time within which to issue a warrant;
3. The time within which to try a case for which a demand for speedy trial has been filed;
4. The time within which to hold a commitment hearing;
5. A deadline or other regular schedule regarding the detention of a juvenile;
6. The time within which to return a bill of indictment or an accusation or to bring a matter before a grand jury;
7. The time within which to file a writ of habeas corpus;
8. The time within which discovery or any aspect thereof is to be completed;
9. The time within which to serve a party;
10. The time within which to appeal or to seek the right to appeal any order, ruling, or other determination;
11. The time within which hearings must be held in stalking or family violence cases and all ex parte relief is continued until next scheduled hearing in said matter; and
12. Such other legal proceedings as may be determined to be necessary.

The relief granted herein expires at 11:59 P.M. on Friday, September 27, 2024, unless otherwise ordered by the court.

Because the court expect all public building within the circuit to be closed for an indeterminate period of time, the court is unable to designate another facility for the transaction of court business. Should the state of emergency extend beyond the closure period indicated above, the court will make a determination of an available, appropriate facility to the conduct of court business when it is appropriate to do so and make a determination of extended dates and times for the conduct of court business.

This order shall be served upon the Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, clerks of the Georgia Supreme Court and Georgia Court of Appeals and all judges and clerks of the Southern Judicial Circuit. Further, notice of the issuance of the order is to be given to all affected parties and their counsel. All Clerks are ordered to post this order conspicuously in their respective courthouses and spread this Order upon the minutes of the courts.

SO ORDERED, this 26 day of Sept., 2024.

*Richard M. Cowart by [Signature] w/ Express permission*  
**HON. RICHARD M. COWART**  
CHIEF JUDGE, SUPERIOR COURTS  
SOUTHERN JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

xc: Chief Justice, Georgia Supreme Court  
All Judges  
All Clerks of Courts  
District Attorney  
Public Defender