

Coronavirus Update

March 13, 2020

At this point, the NAALJ Annual Conference will be held as scheduled from October 4 – 7, 2020. NAALJ and the DC Affiliate are finalizing an exciting Conference program. It is too soon for NAALJ to determine whether the coronavirus pandemic might disrupt the October 2020 Annual Conference. The NAALJ Board of Governors is carefully monitoring reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, as well as local governments, and will reassess the situation in the coming weeks and apprise members if there is any change to holding the Annual Conference as planned.

Relatedly, the National Center for State Courts' (NCSC) website contains excellent resource materials to help courts manage the coronavirus pandemic, including a Federal Emergency Management Agency course on Pandemic Awareness, an emergency response bench book and operational guide, and the podcast "Pandemic: Lessons for Judges and Other Court Employees." <https://www.ncsc.org>.

Some news about how administrative courts are addressing the coronavirus situation has trickled in from NAALJ members. NYC OATH has temporarily suspended its rescheduling rules and will automatically grant rescheduling requests. <https://www.nyc.gov/site/oath>. Georgia's OSAH has recommended that cases be continued, or a telephone hearing be scheduled, if a party specifically indicates a concern about appearing in court. Also, OSAH is encouraging all judges to telework since they have the capability of working remotely and is providing its judges with updates and keeping them informed about press releases from the Governor. The Maryland Governor's newly announced attendance and leave policy on pandemic flu and other infectious diseases will allow more telework by ALJs, as well as by certain non-essential staff who are able to perform job functions remotely. In addition, Maryland OAH has made its telephone hearing and postponement policies more flexible, particularly for those over 60. In some states, ALJs are being given the option of working from home, including holding hearings using video conferencing from home. In Iowa, ALJs have been encouraged to change in person meetings to telephone meetings, and anticipate receiving more guidance. At one federal agency, ALJs are being encouraged to telecommute and those eligible are being encouraged to take home their computers so they can work using Virtual Private Network accounts.

If your court has addressed this situation in a way that you feel would benefit our members to know about, please e-mail NAALJ at naalj@naalj.org so that we might post what policies or procedures your court has developed to the NAALJ website for our members' benefit.

In the meantime, the NAALJ Board of Governors extends well wishes to all our members for their health, safety, and well being during this uncharted time.