

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE AT UNION STATION
1717 Pacific Avenue, Room 4427
Tacoma, Washington 98402-3224

ROBERT J. BRYAN
United States District Judge

Telephone:
(253) 882-3870

July 20, 2020

TO: All Counsel in: C17-5806RJB, State of Washington v The GEO Group, Inc.
C17-5769RJB, Nwauzor et al v The GEO Group, Inc.

FROM: Judge Robert J. Bryan

Dear Counsel:

Since May 1, 2020, your cases have been on a “standby” due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is still “raging” and explosive” here in Pierce County and Washington State. I indicated to you that these cases would be the first civil jury cases to be called in my court. That is still the case, but a probable trial date is still unknown.

All federal court levels have been diligently working to reopen the courts, but our court – the Western District of Washington – has not yet adopted a re-opening time line or rules for trials to be safely held in light of the pandemic.

It is probable that, when we can go back to jury trials, trials will be conducted somewhat differently than what we are all used to. It is likely that masks and shields will be required, that witnesses may be required – or encouraged – to testify remotely by videoconference; that spectators may only watch proceedings remotely and that numbers may be limited; social distancing will be required, etc. Courtrooms will be re-fitted to allow social distancing. Flexibility of the Court and counsel will be necessary. How these plans will work in providing fair trials is unknown.

Some state trial courts have started conducting jury trials, and we will hopefully gain from their experiences.

This is by far the longest period of time I have had without a trial since my admission to practice in 1959. The situation is extremely frustrating to us judges, as it is to counsel and litigants, but the status of your cases remains as determined at the Pretrial Conference on May 1, 2020.

I'll do my best to keep you posted of changes in procedure, and of scheduling.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert J. Bryan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R".

ROBERT J. BRYAN
United States District Judge

RJB/jvl