

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF FULTON COUNTY
STATE OF GEORGIA

AUG 22 2024

CHÉ ALEXANDER
Clerk of Superior Court

Fulton County, Georgia

IN RE:

**PROCEDURE FOR ALL
CRIMINAL CASES ASSIGNED TO
JUDGE MELYNEE LEFRIDGE'S
DIVISION**

2024EX _____

For all criminal cases assigned to this Division in which the Defendant has entered a plea of "not guilty" and requested the case be further noticed to a trial calendar, the following deadlines, policies and procedures govern. Absent **express** permission from this Court, no exceptions, extensions or waivers to the requirements set forth herein will be authorized.

The specific deadlines for discovery and motion filing are provided in accordance with a separate Case Specific Scheduling Order ("CSSO") at Plea and Arraignment ("P & A"). Re-indicted cases are likewise bound by the CSSO dates, notices and published calendars for the originally indicted case, absent good cause shown and further Order of this Court.

COMMUNICATING WITH THE COURT

1. General

While the Court encourages counsel to communicate with chambers, such communication shall be in writing and emailed to the Court's Litigation Manager, Mr. Wayne Dixon (Wayne.Dixon@fultoncountyga.gov) and/or hard copies submitted. All written communications to this court shall be sent, in the same format sent to the Court, to counsel of record, unless the matter is a proper *ex parte* filing.

2. Email

The Court, *via* the Litigation Manager, communicates with counsel *via* email whenever possible. At the entry of appearance of counsel, the attorneys are required to provide their email addresses to Litigation Manager Wayne Dixon by emailing same to him. If you do not personally check your emails, you must arrange to have your emails forwarded to someone in your office who will be responsible for checking them and informing you of

the messages/documents which have been sent. To avoid **inappropriate ex parte** communications, submit all questions, explanations or discussions concerning your case by email, with a copy to opposing counsel. Appropriate *ex parte* communications are excepted from this rule. To prevent miscommunications and inappropriate *ex parte* communications, avoid telephoning chambers except in exceptional circumstances.

3. Communication with Judge

In no instance, should counsel directly email the Judge.

DISCOVERY

1. General

The parties shall promptly and completely comply with the requirements of O.C.G.A. § 17-16-4 by the specific discovery deadline communicated by the Court as set forth in the separate CSSO entered in each Defendant's case. Any supplemental discovery must be supplemented as soon as practicable--- but in any event no later than five (5) business days after receipt of any additional information, documents, reports or other matters which are subject to disclosure pursuant to applicable criminal discovery statutes.

2. Extensions

Any request for an extension of the deadline within which to serve discovery shall be submitted in the form of a written motion to the Court by the discovery deadline. Such motions must provide a detailed, fact-based explanation of the need for the extension, including the amount of time actually needed to provide outstanding discovery, *along with a proposed Order* for the Court's consideration. As with all motions, a courtesy copy of any filed motion for an extension of any deadline must be forwarded to Judge Leftridge's chambers *via* email to Mr. Dixon. **Any and all** outstanding forensic testing, requested by either party, must be brought to the Court's attention by way of timely request for an extension filed **PRIOR TO** the discovery deadline in order to prevent delays in connection with the trial of the case and/or other court dates and/or court-imposed deadlines.

3. **Compelling Discovery**

The parties are directed to comply with all discovery obligations. The parties are ordered not to file “form” motions seeking an order compelling the generalized disclosure of discoverable materials or the general exclusion of evidence. Any such non-specific “form” motions will not be considered by the Court. Should a party need to file a motion to compel discovery, the party shall itemize the articulable and case-specific instances in which the party believes the opposing party has failed to comply with discovery obligations. Such a motion shall be filed immediately after the discovery deadline has passed and no later than the “motion filing” deadline.

4. **Experts**

Any party seeking to rely on expert testimony at trial (or any evidentiary hearing) must provide written notice to the opposing party. The notice must include a meaningful summary of the expert’s testimony, as well as, his/her/their qualifications to serve as an expert witness. The notice must be provided *at least* 14 days before trial and 7 days before any evidentiary hearing.

MOTIONS

1. **General**

The due date for all motions is the specific motions filing deadline, communicated by the Court in the CSSO. Motions filed after the due date are untimely and will *not* be considered, absent a showing of just cause for the late filing. Copeland v. State, 272 Ga. 816, 817 (2000); USCR 31.1. Counsel **shall** ensure he/she/they email, to Litigation Manager Wayne Dixon, a proposed Order in connection with any “standard” procedural motions (such as, Motions to Withdraw as Counsel, Motions for Continuance, Motions for Extending Deadline Imposed by the Court and similar such motions). All such proposed Orders **shall** be transmitted by email to Mr. Dixon in WORD format, such that the Court is able to make any changes/amendments to any such proposed Orders. Proposed Orders **shall not be filed** with the Clerk of Court as they unnecessarily clutter the index of case in the Odyssey system.

2. **Application**

The motion filing requirements and deadlines apply to all motions, including O.C.G.A. § 26-3-24 immunity motions as well as demurrers, pleas in bar or abatement and apply to the following notices: (a) State's notice of O.C.G.A. §§ 24-4-404(b), 24-4-413 and 24-4-414 evidence; (b) State's notice of intention to use child hearsay; (c) Defendant's notice of intent to raise issues of incompetency, insanity, or mental illness (d) Defendant's notice of intent to raise alibi defense and (e) Defendant's notice of intent to introduce evidence of specific acts of violence by victim against third parties. These deadlines do not apply to motions *in limine* involving discrete evidentiary issues, the significance of which is not readily apparent until focused trial preparation. However, untimely filed motions to suppress, to dismiss, or to sever defendants, etc. which are improperly titled or "fashioned" as motions *in limine* **will not be considered** after the motion filing deadline has passed, absent a showing of just cause for the late filing.

3. **Filing, Courtesy and Service Copies**

All motions must be filed with the Office of the Clerk of Fulton Superior Court. Parties filing motions are required to deliver a courtesy copy to Judge Leftridge's chambers *via* email to Litigation Manager Wayne Dixon. Courtesy copies of motions must be received by Mr. Dixon on the same day the motions are filed with the Clerk's office. **It is counsel's responsibility to ensure Mr. Dixon received any such emailed courtesy copies.**

4. **Particularization Required**

Only those motions sufficiently particularized as to provide legal notice to the opposing parties will be considered by the Court. Generalized and omnibus motions are not to be filed, and if filed will be denied as vague, dilatory and in violation of this Order. Motions must specify, with particularity, the item or statement or event at issue and must be tailored to the facts of the case before the Court. Thus, a general motion seeking to suppress any and all statements or any and all evidence is insufficient and will be denied. The motion must identify the specific statement or evidence that the movant is seeking to suppress, as well as provide a theory of suppression.

5. **Published Motions Hearing Calendar**

The Court will publish a motions hearing calendar. If no motions which require a hearing are timely filed, *with emailed courtesy copies received by Litigation Manager Wayne Dixon*, your case will not appear on the motions hearing calendar and any such purported motions will not be heard by the Court.

6. **Order to Confer in Advance**

The Court hereby directs the parties to confer before the motions hearing date to determine whether any of the outstanding motions can be narrowed or resolved by agreement and to discuss the State's offer to resolve the case, as well as, Defendant's desire to enter a plea of "guilty"--- or move forward with the motions hearing and trial.

7. **Motions and Orders in Re-indicted Cases**

If a case is re-indicted, all timely filed motions and all orders from the previously indicted case are adopted and effective in the newly indicted case, unless the prior motion or order was addressed by the new indictment (*e.g.* a demurrer to the original indictment).

Counsel **must**, however, send a courtesy copy of any **pending** motions filed in the previously indicted case to the Court's Litigation Manager, so that the Court may be made immediately aware of the existence of the Motion pending in the previously indicted case. The need for this is even more amplified when the previously indicted case was assigned to another jurist. **** An emailed courtesy copy of any pending motion(s) filed under a previous indictment number(s) shall be sent by counsel to Mr. Dixon, within 10 days of any reindictment of the case. ****

FINAL PLEA DATE, NEGOTIATED and NON-NEGOTIATED PLEAS

1. **General**

The Final Plea Date is the last opportunity to present a non-negotiated plea **which can be withdrawn** at the option of the Defendant after the sentence has been communicated by the Court. The right of withdrawal must be exercised on the record, in open court, and expires when court adjourns for the day. The State will not be allowed to place the case

on the “dead docket” or re-indict the case, after the Final Plea Calendar, absent good cause shown **and** further Order of this Court. All counsel and defendants must appear at the Final Plea Calendar, unless the case was previously resolved or it appeared on a previous trial calendar. The Court will not reset the Final Plea Calendar date absent a showing of good cause **and** express authorization by the Court.

2. **Order to Confer in Advance**

The Court hereby orders the parties to confer and negotiate with each other **well before** the date of the Final Plea Calendar, such that there will be an announcement from defense counsel, at the calendar call of the Final Plea Calendar, as to whether the case is anticipated to resolve that day by guilty plea or whether Defendant desires a trial. ***There will be no pre-trying cases during the Final Plea Calendar. All negotiations shall be resolved before the commencement of the Final Plea Calendar. The Court is simply and only entertaining announcements from defense counsel as to how his/her client would like to proceed in resolving the case. The progress of the Final Plea Calendar will not be delayed by last minute discussions/negotiations between counsel. *** Again, in order to facilitate this mandate, counsel for the State and the defense MUST work together diligently (and defense counsel in relaying information to his/her/their client) to ensure the communication of offers and counter-offers have concluded well before the date of the Final Plea Calendar. ******

3. **Entering Guilty Pleas**

Negotiated and/or non-negotiated pleas may be entered prior to the date of the Final Plea Calendar. The parties are directed to contact Wayne Dixon, Litigation Manager, at (404) 612-2806 to schedule a date for entry of a guilty plea, prior to the date of the Final Plea Calendar. The Court will make every effort to accommodate such requests.

In this regard, the Court will afford a Defendant one opportunity to enter a non-negotiated plea before the date of the Final Plea Calendar. The Defendant may, as discussed above, withdraw his/her guilty plea, should he/she be disinterested in accepting the sentence to be imposed by the Court. However, if a non-negotiated plea has been

withdrawn by the Defendant, the Court will not permit the Defendant to withdraw a non-negotiated guilty plea, after the Court has communicated to Defendant the sentence to be imposed by the Court, at any subsequent non-negotiated plea opportunity.

4. **Accountability Court Sentence Recommendations**

The Court encourages Accountability Court sentence recommendations for non-violent offenders. However, a Defendant must have been interviewed and accepted by the Accountability Court program (Drug Court, Behavioral Health Treatment Court or Veteran's Court) **prior** to sentencing for the Court to consider the recommendation. The Court encourages counsel to contact Litigation Manager Wayne Dixon, early in the pendency of the case, preferably before Plea and Arraignment, if counsel is requesting assistance in scheduling an Accountability Court referral or interview.

5. **Continuance/Request for Status Conference**

In the event counsel desires to seek a continuance from the Final Plea Calendar or the Trial Calendar, counsel must notify the Court **by filing a motion for continuance and/or status conference at least 14 business days before the Final Plea Calendar and/or Trial Date**, absent good cause shown. Such motion shall specifically identify the grounds for the request for continuance and/or conference and, as indicated above, a proposed order in WORD format shall be emailed to Litigation Manager Wayne Dixon (Wayne.Dixon@fultoncountyga.gov).

TRIAL DATE AND PRETRIAL PROCEDURE

1. **General**

The Court may call any case appearing on the Trial Calendar to trial, upon 4-hour notice to counsel, **and may likely call the cases to trial in an order which does not follow the order in which the cases are listed on the published Trial Calendar**. Any case which does not get reached during the pendency of a trial calendar will "rollover" to the next available trial calendar. Counsel is expected to be "ready [for trial] when reached" absent any legal excuse.

2. **Report for Trial Calendar**

For all cases in which a plea of “not guilty” has been entered and said case does not meet a resolution short of trial, Defendants and counsel are to report to the Fulton County Justice Center Tower, 185 Central Avenue, SW, Atlanta, Georgia 30303, (Courtroom 8C) when directed to do so. **As such, it is counsel’s responsibility to ensure the Court’s Litigation Manager, Wayne Dixon, has a working cell phone number and email address upon which counsel can be contacted immediately to receive a message to report to trial.** The Court reiterates herein that counsel shall be prepared to report to trial at any point during the pendency of the trial calendar. The Court will notify counsel, at the contact number offered by counsel, that the case has been called to trial and will give counsel notice of at least 4-hours within which to report to Judge Leftridge’s courtroom ready to proceed.

3. **Pretrial Submissions Due AT LEAST five (5) days prior to the 1st day of Trial Calendar**

Unless the Court directs otherwise, counsel is required to submit, by email to Litigation Manager Wayne Dixon, **AT LEAST five (5) days before the start of the trial calendar** the following items:

- a. **All proposed GENERAL Voir Dire Questions**
- b. **A list of potential witnesses**

This witness list will simply provide the Court with the names of any potential witnesses and any applicable professional titles/positions.

- c. **Motions in Limine**

At the time of filing motions *in limine* with the Clerk’s Office, a courtesy copy of the motion(s) *in limine* shall be attached to an email sent to Mr. Dixon with opposing counsel copied on such email. Such motions should be limited to discrete evidentiary or procedural matters, such as the admissibility of a specific piece of evidence. As mentioned above, it is not proper to attempt to raise, as a purported motion *in limine*, matters which should have been raised and resolved during the pretrial motions phase of the “journey to trial.” such

as the submission of identification evidence or a confession or a motion to sever, etc. Such a motion cast as a motion *in limine* will be denied as untimely, absent good cause shown.

d. Proposed Requests to Charge Jury

The parties shall submit requests to charge jury as follows:

PATTERN jury charges **shall** be *listed on a single cover page*. Each **PATTERN** charge **shall** be numbered **and** identified by title and paragraph. The substance/content of any such **PATTERN** charge **shall not** be put forth. In other words, for **PATTERN** charges, each party is to submit, in a numbered listing on a cover page, *only* the **PATTERN** charge by name and paragraph---- and not the text of each such **PATTERN** charge.

Each side is limited to fifteen (15) **NON-PATTERN** charges, unless leave to file additional **NON-PATTERN** charges is sought and obtained (in writing) from the Court. Counsel for the State shall also include, within its submitted charges, **the applicable portion** of the code section for each offense alleged in the indictment; these jury charges will not count against the number of **NON-PATTERN** charges allowed the State.

For all **NON-PATTERN** charges, the parties are required to submit the full text of each such requested **NON-PATTERN** charge and, below such text, the requesting party shall reference the case law, statute or other authority supporting such requested **NON-PATTERN** charge.

A COURTESY COPY OF ALL REQUESTS TO CHARGE JURY
(**PATTERN** charge cover page **and** **NON-PATTERN** charges) **SHALL BE**
EMAILED TO THE COURT IN WORD FORMAT TO THE COURT'S
SR. STAFF ATTORNEY, SARAH THOMAS AT
Sarah.Thomas@fultoncountyga.gov, in addition to being emailed to Mr.
Dixon.

CONDUCT DURING HEARINGS AND TRIAL

The Court further **ORDERS** that all counsel shall conform his/her/their conduct, when making any court appearance in this Division, as follows:

1. **Timeliness**

Counsel (and parties) will timely appear before the Court at each setting and following each recess.

2. **Voir Dire Procedure**

Counsel shall submit to the Court all proposed general *voir dire* questions as directed above. Prior to the commencement of the *voir dire* process, the Court will discuss with the counsel/parties which of their proposed questions will be permitted to be asked.

Counsel is permitted to use electronic devices containing his/her/their *voir dire* questions during the jury questioning phase of the trial. HOWEVER, should the use of such electronic devices during juror questioning interfere with the efficiency of the jury selection process, the Court will compel counsel to utilize a paper copy of the *voir dire* questions in interacting with the jurors. Accordingly, counsel shall bring to court a PAPER COPY of his/her/their anticipated general and individual *voir dire* questions for potential use during the *voir dire* process.

a. **Statutory and General Questions**

Prospective jurors will be seated in the gallery in numerical order; each prospective juror will have a card with his/her/their juror number on it.

Prospective jurors will respond to the Court's and counsel's general questions by raising their cards in response to any question to which they wish to offer an affirmative response. Any co-counsel who may be assisting lead counsel during *voir dire* should be recording affirmative responses to all general questions, in order to facilitate the efficiency of the jury selection process.

b. Individual Questions

After the general questioning phase has concluded, prospective jurors will submit themselves to individual questioning by panel. Prior to any individual questioning, each prospective member of each panel will first respond to several questions located on the back of their jury number cards. Counsel will then be permitted to conduct follow-up questioning--arising from responses to the general questions, panelist by panelist, provided that counsel is efficient in his/her/their use of the panelist's time.

The Court will not permit the parties to ask repetitive questions or an unlimited number of questions during examination of potential jurors. Counsel will restrict their *voir dire* examination to such matters as are permissible by law and shall not engage in arguing their case or in placing inadmissible matters before the jury panel. Counsel shall not lead jurors and are directed to ask open-ended, non-leading questions. If counsel is repeating inquiries or exploring improper areas of inquiry outside the scope of the general questions, the Court may resume the role of questioner. This process will be repeated until the Court determines enough jurors have been qualified to permit peremptory striking to begin. For efficiency and effective use of notes, counsel may individually *voir dire* panelists from counsel table.

c. Juror Information Sheets

Jury Services provides the Court and attorneys Juror Information Sheets for all panelists as a courtesy prior to *voir dire*. Attorneys are hereby directed not to copy the information sheets and are cautioned to avoid taking important notes on the information sheets, as they will be collected by the sheriff's deputy immediately following jury selection.

d. Motion to Strike for Cause

The Court will hear motions to strike potential jurors for cause immediately after concluding with the individual questions for each panel, prior to

excusing such group and prior to peremptory strike process. While each of the panel members are before the Court, the Court will call attorneys to side bar before excusing each such panel. At side bar, the Court will solicit motions to strike for cause any member of that panel, will hear argument on same and will rule at that time.

e. **Jury Selection**

Peremptory strikes will be by silent strike sheet. The parties shall consider each juror in order starting with the State then Defendant(s) accepting or striking Panel Member Number 1, then Panel Member Number 2, etc. "A" indicates the panelist is accepted by that party, "S1" through "S9" are used by the State to indicate its first nine strikes (and higher if more strikes are awarded); "D1" through "D9" are used by Defendant to indicate his or her first nine strikes (and higher if more strikes are awarded); "SA1", etc. is used by the State to indicate its alternative strikes and "DA1", etc. is used by Defendant to indicate his or her alternative strikes. Once a jury of twelve has been selected the same process will then be applied to the *very next panel member* with the parties using their alternate strikes until the alternate jurors are selected. Before striking begins, the Court will inform the parties of the universe of panelists from which they are to strike (e.g. from Panelist No. 1 through No. 36).

3. **Duty to Have Witnesses on Hand**

The parties and attorneys are ordered to have enough witnesses on call for each day's proceedings. If a party fails to have a "next witness" to call to testify, the Court may, in its discretion, mandate that the party's case rests.

4. **Duty to Instruct Witnesses**

The parties and attorneys are hereby ordered to instruct all of their testifying witnesses regarding the following: (a) pause and do not talk when an attorney objects during the witness' testimony, wait for the Court to rule on the objection and respond to any pending

question **only** if the objection is overruled by the Court (b) avoid talking over the attorneys or judge (c) refrain from referencing any evidence excluded by prior Court orders and (d) avoid discussing their testimony with any other potential trial witnesses during trial.

5. **One Attorney Rule**

Only one attorney for each party may examine or cross examine a witness. Only one attorney for each party may object to the testimony of a witness being questioned by an opposing party. The objection must be made by the attorney who has conducted or is to conduct the examination of the witness. Only one attorney for each party may argue a motion.

6. **Avoid Addressing Attorneys**

Attorneys are prohibited from addressing comments or questions to each other while on the record. All arguments, objections and motions must be addressed to the Court, with the exception that statements and arguments can be made directly to the jury ---but only during opening statements or closing arguments.

7. **Exhibits**

Exhibits SHALL be marked BEFORE trial. Any party that intends to introduce exhibits during trial shall provide two hard copies of an exhibit list to the Court (one to the judge and one to the court reporter) and one copy to each opposing party **prior to jury selection.** The exhibit list should include for each exhibit both the exhibit number and a brief description of what the exhibit purports to be. Counsel is under a continuing obligation to preview exhibits with opposing counsel before relevant witnesses are called to the testify. It is not an appropriate use of the jurors' time to have the parties reviewing proposed exhibits while the witness waits on the witness stand and the jurors sit idly in the jury box. Counsel shall obtain approval from the Court before publishing any evidence/exhibits to the jury.

11. **Use of Lectern**

Unless otherwise permitted by the Court, counsel shall use the lectern and microphone positioned in the middle of the courtroom during hearings. During opening statements and closing arguments, counsel may move freely a few paces in front of the jury box; however, at no time will counsel be permitted to make physical contact with any juror (or the jury box) or seek to engage members of the *petit* jury in a conversation. When approaching a witness with an exhibit, counsel is to abide by the instructions set forth below. During *voir dire*, counsel may individually question jurors with his/her/their notes from counsel table.

12. **Approaching Witnesses**

Counsel shall ask permission from the Court before approaching a witness with evidence. Counsel shall refrain from standing over the witness, rather, counsel shall deliver the document or other piece of evidence to the witness and retreat a few paces away from the witness. When appropriate, counsel may request that the witness step down from the witness stand for purposes of demonstrating, drawing or otherwise illustrating a matter for the benefit of the jury. Counsel may remain within the proximity of the witness during such demonstration; however, counsel shall not seek to intimidate or influence the witness directly or indirectly.

13. **In Court Presentation of Documents to Judge**

Counsel shall deliver to the bailiff any documents to be presented to the Court ---or ask permission to approach the bench to deliver documents to the Court.

14. **Preparation of Orders**

Counsel shall promptly prepare orders or judgments to be presented to the Court. **Such orders shall be presented to the court in WORD format.** Unless directed otherwise, proposed orders shall be submitted by email to the Court *via* the Court's Litigation Manager, Mr. Wayne Dixon (Wayne.Dixon@fultoncountyga.gov) and opposing counsel simultaneously and **within three business days** of the pronouncement of that order or judgment. In no instance, should counsel directly email the judge.

SENTENCING HEARINGS

1. Victim Impact Statements

All victim impact statements must be in writing, on point and directed to the Court *and not others*. They are to be no longer than two pages in length and may be read by the victim, victim's family or loved ones or the prosecutor.

2. Requests for Leniency

Any requests for leniency must be in writing, on point and directed to the Court *and not others*. These requests are to be no longer than two pages in length and may be read by Defendant, the Defendant's family or loved ones or Defendant's attorney.

3. Timing

The Court anticipates proceeding with sentencing hearings immediately after any conviction. However, should any party make a good cause showing, the Court will consider continuing the sentencing to a date occurring very shortly thereafter.

REQUEST FOR COURT SERVICES

1. Court Interpreter

Upon request, the Court will provide interpretation services for any non-English speaking Defendant. The request for an interpreter must be submitted in writing *via* email to the court's Judicial Assistant, Ms. T'Mya Tomlinson

(TMya.Tomlinson@fultoncountyga.gov) **no later than (five) 5 business days prior** to the hearing date.

2. Court Production Order

At the request of counsel, the Court will order production of a Defendant and/or witness incarcerated in any Georgia prison, jail system or facility. For individuals located within the Georgia Department of Corrections system, the requested inmate's identifying information should coincide with the Georgia Department of Corrections' identifying information for that inmate. Counsel/parties must submit his/her/their request in writing

to Litigation Manager Wayne Dixon and the production request must be received **no later than fourteen (14) days** before the scheduled court appearance.

3. **Courtroom Evidence Presentation**

In the event any party intends to utilize exhibits during any hearing, trial or other proceeding and counsel is unfamiliar with the evidence presentation technology in Courtroom 8C, that attorney is required to email a written request for equipment training to the Court's Sr. Staff Attorney, Ms. Sarah Thomas (Sarah.Thomas@fultoncountyga.gov). Training can generally be accomplished in fifteen (15) minutes. This request should be submitted in writing to Sr. Staff Attorney Sarah Thomas **no later than five (5) business days before** the trial date. Timely email notification to Ms. Johnson is sufficient. **HOWEVER**, (and unfortunately) the courtroom evidence presentation technology can be unreliable, therefore, it highly recommended attorneys and parties be prepared with alternative means of displaying evidence, in the event the courtroom equipment is not functioning properly. **In no event will the inability to utilize courtroom technology serve as a basis to delay trial.**

APPEARANCE AT ALL CALENDARS AND HEARINGS

1. **Attorneys**

No attorney shall appear in that capacity before the Court until the attorney has filed an entry of appearance which fully complies with USCR. 4.2 or a notice of substitution of counsel which fully complies with USCR. 4.3(3). Attorneys are required to appear at all published calendars and properly noticed court appearances, unless a proper Leave of Absence in accordance with USCR. 16.1 or 16.2 or a proper conflict letter in accordance with USCR 17.1 is timely filed--- or the attorney is otherwise expressly excused by the Court. Note that any Leave of Absence not filed or served pursuant USCR 16.1 or 16.2 or filed prior to entry of appearance of counsel in a case at issue and not served upon chambers, stands **DENIED** under USCR 16.4.

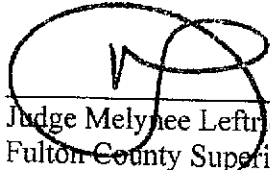
Counsel should be particularly mindful of the fact that the filing of a conflict letter **DOES NOT** serve to excuse counsel from appearing before the Court, **unless** there is an **actual** conflict. **Should counsel fail to follow the guidance of USCR 17.1 and its subsections, counsel shall not be deemed to have a conflict, in accordance with USCR 17.1 (A).**

2. **Defendants**

Unless expressly excused by the Court, **Defendants** must appear at all calendar calls and properly noticed court dates for his/her/their case, even if his/her attorney has a properly filed conflict letter, leave of absence or other expressly excused absence. Failure to report to court for a calendar will likely result in forfeiture of any bond which may have been set and the issuance of a bench warrant for the arrest of the Defendant.

Let it be **SO ORDERED**.

This 22 day of August 2024.



Judge Melynee Leftridge
Fulton County Superior Court
Atlanta Judicial Circuit