

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information contact:

February 9, 2021

Chief Justice Michael K. Davis
307-777-7421

WYOMING COURTS ADAPT, USE TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP UP *Jury trials are proceeding*

With the gradual reduction in COVID case numbers, Wyoming courts have picked up the pace of jury trials, with more scheduled for the coming months. “We have been able to keep doing the bulk of our work thanks to good technology that allowed us to conduct many proceedings remotely, and to court staff and county health personnel who made it possible for us to adopt the necessary precautions for in-person proceedings,” said Seventh Judicial District Court Judge Catherine Wilking.

District courts, which handle civil cases over \$50,000, criminal felonies, divorces, juvenile cases, probates and guardianships, conducted approximately two dozen jury trials during the three months in 2020 when restrictions were relaxed. “Pretty impressive when you consider all the logistical challenges of conducting a jury trial during a pandemic,” Judge Wilking, who is President of the District Court Judges Conference, said. “It’s also an impressive showing by Wyoming citizens who fulfilled their civic duty,” she added.

Already this year, a dozen jury trials have been set in district courts throughout the State, with four or five completed. “It’s not unusual for cases to settle or criminal pleas to be entered just before trial,” Judge Wilking explained. “The impending trial tends to motivate people to work out their differences.” Many more jury trials are scheduled in February, March, and beyond, and with COVID numbers dropping in Wyoming, are expected to proceed. Wilking added there is little to no backlog in the district courts for the many non-jury matters on the courts’ dockets – probate, juveniles, child support, Title 25 cases, matters to be tried to the bench, and non-jury criminal matters.

Circuit courts handle misdemeanor criminal cases, civil cases under \$50,000, small claims, evictions, lien foreclosures, orders of protection, preliminary hearings in felony cases, and issue warrants. Circuit courts have also conducted half a dozen jury trials in 2021 alone, and have many more scheduled.

“The Wyoming judiciary is committed to providing the just, speedy, and inexpensive determination of every action, in accordance with the law,” Chief Justice Michael Davis said. “It can do so because of the work of a very small corps of dedicated judges and court personnel, and with the critical assistance of the public.”