# Administrative Office of the Courts

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 15, 2020

Contact: Barry Massey, public information officer
bmassey@nmcourts.gov
505-827-4805; 505-470-3436

**People entering New Mexico courthouses required to wear a face covering**

SANTA FE – Effective Saturday, any person entering a courthouse or judicial building must wear a mask or other face covering to help control the spread of COVID-19, the state Supreme Court ordered today.

Courts will be prepared to provide masks to people without one when they need to enter a court facility.

The Supreme Court last week directed court staff and judicial officers in appellate, district, magistrate, metropolitan, municipal and probate courts and the Administrative Office of the Courts to wear masks in the workplace effective today.

"State health officials have made it abundantly clear that if each of us wears a mask in public we can help slow the spread of COVID-19 and save lives," said Chief Justice Judith K. Nakamura. "Our courts provide essential services to the public so we continue to take all steps necessary to safeguard the health and well-being of people who work in or need to visit a courthouse."

Judges have the discretion to remove their face mask when speaking during a court hearing to ensure a clear record is kept of the proceeding.

The Supreme Court has previously ordered other precautionary measures in courts during the COVID-19 pandemic, including requiring judges to conduct audio and video teleconferencing for hearings, except when an emergency requires in-person appearances. Courts also limit the number of people in courtrooms and other locations inside a courthouse to promote physical distancing recommended by health officials.

Under a state public health emergency order, New Mexicans must wear face coverings in public places starting Saturday, except when eating, drinking, exercising or because of a medical instruction. People can request a mask from the state through the New Mexico Department of Health's website, which also provides instructions on how to make a mask.

###

Chief Justice Judith K. Nakamura wears a mask today in the Supreme Court courtroom during an online meeting with chief justices where she explained the requirement for people to wear face coverings when entering a courthouse. Photo courtesy of the Administrative Office of the Courts.