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8TH DISTRICT, VIRGINIA

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

COMMITTEE ON
SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE
(VICE-CHAIR)

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March 16, 2020

Administrative Office of the United States Courts
Thurgood Marshall Federal Judiciary Building
One Columbus Circle, NE, Suite 7-110
Washington, DC 20544

Dear Administrative Office of the United States Courts:

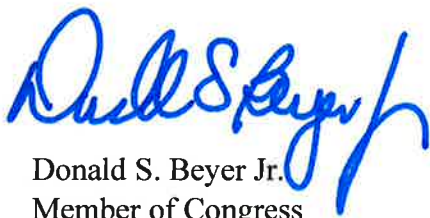
I am deeply concerned to hear that our federal court system is not taking sufficient proactive measures while we face this national pandemic. While our justice system is integral to the bedrock, freedoms, and safety of our society, the health and safety of our society must also be paramount. It is imperative that our federal court systems take appropriate steps to protect the health of the country and those involved in the court system.

Currently, I remain concerned that there is no national guidance for the federal court system and that it is being left to the local courts to react as best as possible. For a national pandemic, this is simply too late. I urge the incorporation of technical tools wherever possible as well as any scientifically-based health and safety solutions that protect the judges, their staff, the contract interpreters, the private bar, the respondents and their witnesses, the security staff, and others that make each hearing possible.

It is impossible to determine which individuals who are part of hearings are ill with the COVID-19 virus. Indeed, it is also possible that people can infect others even though they are asymptomatic. More concerning, though, because of the lack of testing, we do not have an accurate count of cases of COVID-19, meaning that the penetration of the virus could be more prevalent than local health data and thus decision making could be based on imperfect information.

For the safety of all involved, I ask that you put forward national guidance on how our courts can be proactive in their procedures and keep the safety of all involved a priority.

Sincerely,



Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress