

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF RHODE ISLAND**

**GENERAL ORDER TEMPORARILY MODIFYING THE MEANS OF FILING
DOCUMENTS WITH THE COURT BY SELF-REPRESENTED PARTIES
DUE TO COVID 19 VIRUS PANDEMIC**

GENERAL ORDER 20-004

In recognition of recommendations by the CDC and other public health agencies that social distancing measures are the most effective way to prevent the rapid spread of COVID-19, this Court has entered General Order 20-003 closing the Rhode Island Bankruptcy Court to the public, effective Wednesday, March 25, 2020. Due to the uncertainties of the course of the pandemic, this temporary order shall remain in effect until rescinded by the Court. To continue providing effective access to the Bankruptcy Court for the public,

IT IS ORDERED:

1. Effective as of the date of this Order, the Clerk of Court is permitted to accept the filing of new petitions, motions, pleadings, notices, and other papers (“Court Filings”) by self-represented parties by any of the following means:

- a. Email Method:

- i. by e-mail as set forth in [LBR 5001-2\(c\)](#) for *Emergency Filings by Non-Electronic Users in the Event of an Unexpected Court Closure During Normal Court Business Hours*. Subsection (c)(1) of the rule provides:

Emailing Documents to the Court. The Non-Electronic Users must attach the document to be filed in Adobe PDF format to an **email addressed to the Clerk’s Office Helpdesk at “rib_helpdesk@rib.uscourts.gov”**. The ECF Help Desk address is also available on the Court’s website (www.rib.uscourts.gov) under the menu “Electronic Filing/Electronic Filing Help Desk”.

If a self-represented filer is unable to attach PDF files to an email, the self-represented filer should contact the Clerk’s Office at 401-626-3100 for instructions.

- ii. [LBR 5001-2\(c\)\(2\)](#), **Required Follow Up Procedures**, is hereby amended as follows:

(2) Required Follow Up Procedures. Within twenty-one (21) days of electronic submission of Court Filings that require a signature under oath (such as new case petition and bankruptcy

~~statements and schedules) No later than 12:00 p.m. (noon) Eastern Standard Time on the Court's next open business day, the Non-Electronic User must either place in the mail to the Court or place in hand deliver the Court's drop box if available, the original document to the Court, together with any required filing fee and containing original signature(s) signed under oath. If such original document is not received by the Court within seven (7) days, the emailed document will have no force or effect, and will be terminated on the case docket.~~

This rule change has the following effect:

- to only require the mailing of a hard copy signed original of the Court Filing if it requires a signature under oath and
 - to extend the time period to place the Court Filing in the mail to twenty-one (21) days. If this deadline poses a significant obstacle, the self-represented filer should file a motion to extend time with stated grounds.
- iii. This temporary use of LBR 5001-2(c) for non-emergency filings will be superseded as soon as an alternative “electronic drop box” program becomes available, anticipated to be available for self-represented parties’ use in the coming weeks. The Clerk is hereby authorized to provide Notice of the new non-emergency e-filing procedure for self-represented parties as soon as it is available and without the need for further court order.
- b. by U.S. Mail sent to the Office of the Clerk of Court, U.S. Bankruptcy Court, 380 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903;
- c. by placement in the physical depository box (“drop box”) located outside the Clerk's office public door entrance on the 6th floor of the Federal Center (380 Westminster Street, Providence, RI) for as long as the Federal Center building remains open to the public. Filings made using the drop box must be accompanied by either (a) an e-mail to **rib_helpdesk@rib.uscourts.gov**, indicating the filer’s name, the case name and number, and the date and time at which the filing was placed into the drop box or (b) a telephone call to 401-626-3100 to confirm the deposit.
- d. through any other method expressly authorized in advance by the Court, or the Clerk’s Office which can be reached at 401-626-3100.
2. All Court Filings must comply with formatting requirements found in this Court’s Local Rules (<https://www.rib.uscourts.gov/newhome/rulesinfo/html5/default.htm>).

3. Signatures not required to be under oath (such as motions, objections) may be added electronically to Court Filings submitted by email in the format */s/ Full Name* pursuant to this General Order and as provided in this Court's [Local Rule 5005-4 \(j\) and \(k\)](#).
4. All filing fees due by self-represented debtors, may be paid by either (1) bank debit card by contacting the Clerk's office at 401-626-3100 or (2) via U.S. Mail to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, 380 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903. For all other self-represented parties, filing fees may be paid by (1) credit card or debit card by contacting the Clerk's office at 401-626-3100 or (2) via U.S. Mail to the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, 380 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903.
5. Self-represented parties are reminded that even though this order authorizes Court Filings to be made electronically, the Court holds self-represented parties to the same requirements and standards as with paper filings: each signature on a Court Filing, whether electronic or otherwise, is a certification that the filing party is proceeding in good faith and filing the document for a proper purpose. All electronically filed documents are subject to the same potential for sanctions as are paper filings containing original signatures pursuant to F.R.B.P. 9011.
6. Due to the fluidity of the situation surrounding COVID-19, the Court may alter or amend the provisions of this Order as necessary or appropriate to achieve the goal of protecting the health and safety of the public and Court personnel, while at the same time continuing to fulfill the Court's mission and its duties to the public.

SO ORDERED.

Date: March 23, 2020

/s/ Diane Finkle
United States Bankruptcy Court