

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE FIFTH
JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF THE STATE OF FLORIDA**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. A-2024-45-B

**SECOND AMENDED ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER CLOSING
CERTAIN COURTS IN RESPONSE TO HURRICANE HELENE
(to address the closure status of Marion County)**

WHEREAS, Hurricane Helene is projected to make landfall on the west coast of Florida as a Category 3 Hurricane and to cause damage and significant flooding throughout Citrus, Hernando and Marion counties of the Fifth Judicial Circuit; and

WHEREAS, Hurricane Helene has been determined to be an unusually wide storm and at a minimum, tropical storm force winds are projected to effect Lake and Sumter County throughout the passage of the storm; and

WHEREAS, the western portion of Marion County is under a Hurricane Warning, and Municipal, County, and School District Officials of Marion County have made the decision to remain closed on Friday, September 27, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of Florida has declared a state of emergency to include every county within the Fifth Judicial Circuit; and

WHEREAS, public schools, county governments, and other public and private services will be closed in effected areas of the Fifth Judicial Circuit; and

WHEREAS, more than 20 other counties, and all coastal counties north of Citrus and Hernando Counties have closed for business to include Thursday, September 26 and Friday, September 27, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the risk of damage to critical infrastructure and systems used to conduct court business in Citrus and Hernando Counties requires they be shut down for the duration of the storm; and

WHEREAS, based upon the above facts, and with the concurrence of the Administrative Judges of Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, and Sumter Counties, and the Fifth Judicial Circuit Emergency Response Team it has been determined that the courts of the Fifth Judicial Circuit must be closed Thursday, September 26, 2024. Further, the coastal nature of Citrus and Hernando Counties and the proximity of the western portion of Marion County to the Storm, necessitate closure for a longer period of time, consequently the courts of Citrus, Hernando, and Marion Counties must also be

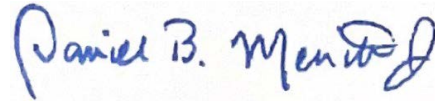
closed for court business until 8:00 a.m. Monday, September 30, 2024. The possibility that an extension of the closure status of courts in Lake and Sumter Counties will continue to be monitored and evaluated, and will be addressed, if need be, pending further development.

It is therefore,

ORDERED and ADJUDGED as follows:

- 1.** The Courts in Citrus, Hernando, and Marion Counties are closed for court business until 8:00 a.m. Monday, September 30, 2024.
- 2.** In addition to the closures found in paragraph 1, immediately above, ALL COURTS of the Fifth Judicial Circuit, including county courts of Lake and Sumter Counties are closed until 8:00 a.m. Friday, September 27, 2024.
- 3.** The intent of this Order is to have courts in Lake and Sumter Counties operating normally at the start of court business on Friday September 27, 2024, and the courts of Citrus, Hernando, and Marion Counties to be operating normally at the start of court business on Monday, September 30, 2024. However, further developments in the track and strength of the Storm, and the Storm's aftermath, may demand amendment.

DONE AND ORDERED in Brooksville, Hernando County,
Florida, this 26th day of September 2024.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel B. Merritt, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Daniel B. Merritt, Jr.
Chief Judge
Fifth Judicial Circuit