

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF ARKANSAS
CENTRAL DIVISION

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTERIAL ALLIANCE, et al.

PLAINTIFFS

v.

NO. 4:19-cv-402

STATE OF ARKANSAS, et al.

DEFENDANTS

ORDER

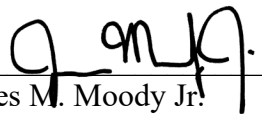
Plaintiffs have asked the Court to reconsider its decision to continue the bench trial in this case from its previous start date of January 18, 2022 to a new start date of April 25, 2022.

The Court determined that a continuance was the best course of action after considering the accelerating surge of the omicron variant, whose effects were being seen increasingly in courthouse personnel, and the fact that the trial is expected to take two weeks and involve multiple lawyers and many witnesses. The April 25th setting was the first available option to reset a two-week case. The Court still believes the continuance was the best course of action given the risks posed by omicron and the likelihood that witnesses or key personnel involved in the case would become infected and be unable to participate in the trial once it had gotten underway. On January 4, 2022, Judge Marshall entered Administrative Order Twenty recognizing the continuing risk to parties, witnesses, and court personnel and extending the modified court operations through the end of February.

This is an important case for Plaintiffs and deserves to be resolved expeditiously. These are also extraordinary times due to the pandemic. The Court has persisted in holding trials throughout the pandemic whenever possible. However, given the length of this trial, the significance of its outcome, and the Court's preference for hearing the evidence as cohesively as possible, the Court is holding to its decision to continue the trial until April 25, 2022.

Plaintiffs' motion for reconsideration (Doc. No. 143) is DENIED.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 27th day of January, 2022.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. M. Moody Jr.", is written over a horizontal line.

James M. Moody Jr.
United States District Judge