

April 15, 2020

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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN  
SOUTHERN DIVISION

*In Re* FLINT WATER CASES Case No. 16-10444

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STATUS CONFERENCE

BEFORE THE HONORABLE JUDITH E. LEVY  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

APRIL 15, 2020

APPEARANCES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Charles E. Barbieri  
Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C.  
313 South Washington Square  
Lansing, MI 48933

Frederick A. Berg  
Butzel Long 150  
West Jefferson, Suite 100  
Detroit, MI 48226

Margaret A. Bettenhausen  
Michigan Department of Attorney General  
P.O. Box 30755  
Lansing, MI 48909

*(Appearances continued on next page)*

**For a Certified Transcript Contact:**  
Jeseca C. Eddington, RDR, RMR, CRR, FCRR  
Federal Official Court Reporter  
United States District Court  
200 East Liberty Street  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

April 15, 2020

2

1 James W. Burdick  
2 Burdick Law, P.C.  
3 1760 South Telegraph Road, Suite 300  
4 Bloomfield Hills, MI 48302

5 James M. Campbell  
6 Campbell, Campbell, Edwards & Conroy  
7 One Constitution Plaza, Suite 300  
8 Boston, MA 02129-2025

9 Jason T. Cohen  
10 U.S. Department of Justice Civil  
11 Division Torts Branch-Environmental Tort  
12 Litigation  
13 175 North Street, NE  
14 Washington, DC 20002

15 Donald H. Dawson, Jr.  
16 Fieger, Fieger, Kenney & Harrington, PC  
17 19390 West Ten Mile Road  
18 Southfield, MI 48075

19 Alaina N. Devine  
20 Campbell Conroy & O'Neil, P.C.  
21 1 Constitution Wharf, Suite 310  
22 Boston, MA 02129

23 Philip A. Erickson  
24 Plunkett & Cooney  
25 325 East Grand River Avenue, Suite 250  
East Lansing, MI 48823

Nathan A. Gambill  
Michigan Department of Attorney General  
ENRA Division  
P.O. Box 30755  
Lansing, MI 48909

Deborah Greenspan, Special Master

David E. Hart  
Maddin Hauser Roth & Heller PC  
28400 Northwestern Highway, Second Floor  
Southfield, MI 48034

Larry R. Jensen, Jr.  
Hall Render Killian Heath & Human PLLC  
Columbia Center, Suite 745  
101 West Big Beaver Road  
Troy, MI 48084

April 15, 2020

3

1 Theodore J. Leopold  
Cohen Milstein Sellers and Toll PLLC  
2 2925 PGA Boulevard, Suite 200  
Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410  
3  
4 Wayne B. Mason  
Faegre, Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP  
1717 Main Street, Suite 5400  
5 Dallas, TX 75201  
6  
7 Michael L. Pitt  
Pitt, McGehee, Palmer & Rivers, PC  
117 West Fourth Street, Suite 200  
8 Royal Oak, MI 48067  
9  
10 Eric Rey  
U.S. Department of Justice  
175 North Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
11  
12 David M. Rogers  
Campbell Conroy & O'Neil, PC  
1 Constitution Wharf, Suite 310  
13 Boston, MA 02129  
14  
15 Alexander S. Rusek  
White Law PLLC  
2400 Science Parkway, Suite 201  
Okemos, MI 48864  
16  
17 Hunter Shkolnik  
Napoli Shkolnik Law PLLC  
1301 Avenue of the Americas  
10th Floor  
18 New York, NY 10019  
19  
20 Susan Elizabeth Smith  
Beveridge & Diamond, PC  
1350 I Street N.W., Suite 700  
Washington, DC 20050  
21  
22 Corey M. Stern  
Levy Konigsberg, LLP  
800 Third Avenue, Suite 11th Floor  
23 New York, NY 10022 C  
24  
25 Craig S. Thompson  
Sullivan Ward Patton Gleeson & Felty  
400 Galleria Officentre, Suite 500  
Southfield, MI 48034

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Valdemar L. Washington  
718 Beach Street, P.O. Box 187  
Flint, MI 48501

Michael L. Williams  
U.S. Department of Justice  
175 North Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20002

To Obtain a Certified Transcript Contact:  
Jeseca C. Eddington, RDR, RMR, CRR, FCRR  
Federal Official Court Reporter  
United States District Court  
200 East Liberty Street - Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

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P R O C E E D I N G S

THE CLERK: Now calling case number 16-10444, the Flint Water cases.

THE COURT: Good. Thank you, Abigail. And in addition to 16-10444, we have essentially all of the pending Flint Water cases. In addition to that, we also have present with us today counsel from the Department of Justice on the Meeks federal tort claims case that they have not yet answered in but there is -- or filed a motion to dismiss. But there is a pending motion and an issue related to that case on the agenda today. So I appreciate their presence.

So first, I wanted to welcome Judge Farah and his staff and go through just a few sort of protocols for how we're going to try to conduct this meeting or this hearing.

But before I do that, I want to welcome everyone to the conference call, including anyone who's on by either video teleconference or telephone. And I sincerely hope that all of you are able to stay home and stay safe and that you and everyone you love is healthy and doing okay.

So I know many of us now know people who have been sickened by COVID-19. Some have died. And so it is an especially difficult time for all of us. And so I appreciate that on this case we're continuing to do everything we can to move the case forward -- cases forward and in light of all that's going on around us.

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1           So we are a court of public record. And it's very  
2 important to me, and it has been since the beginning of my  
3 judgeship, to ensure that the courthouse doors are open to  
4 anyone who has or believes they may have an interest in a  
5 particular proceeding. And that certainly is at its height in  
6 criminal matters about whether our constitutional rights at  
7 issue when the door is closed.

8           But it's also an issue especially in a case like this  
9 where there are a great many people who either are involved as  
10 plaintiffs or defendants. But also there's some interest  
11 beyond the jurisdiction of Flint in this case.

12           So to that end, that's why I set up the additional  
13 conference call feature so that anyone who has an interest in  
14 this litigation can be present. We won't know for sure if it  
15 all works and until we conclude the hearing and receive all  
16 the criticism about what worked or what didn't work. That's  
17 usually what we hear about. We rarely hear when something  
18 works out. That's okay. I don't need to hear that.

19           But from my perspective, if there's a possibility  
20 that doing some of this remote work, which will certainly end  
21 when we're able to end it, permits greater access to the  
22 court, then I'm all for it. Because the drive from Flint to  
23 Ann Arbor is a long one. I'm so thankful that Judge Farah and  
24 his law clerk have made that drive. But it's not the easiest.

25           So if this permits people in Flint to be able to

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1 listen in or participate in a more fulsome way, then I hope we  
2 can take advantage of that.

3 Today's agenda -- and we'll get to appearances in  
4 just a minute -- contains matters that are almost exclusively  
5 related to case management. We don't have substantive motions  
6 about the law that governs the underlying claims in this case  
7 to be addressed today.

8 But in a case like this, case management can have a  
9 significant impact on the equities in the case and on the  
10 outcome of a case. So I appreciate your presence today on the  
11 hearing and your patience as we try to make sure that the  
12 technology works.

13 Before we have appearances, I want to remind  
14 everybody to mute your phone. My court reporter Jeseca  
15 Eddington is present. She's taking down the record. And we  
16 ask that everyone who possibly can have their full name  
17 identified on their device that they're connecting with.

18 And I see that that has generally worked. But not --  
19 it's not 100 percent. And that's understandable. So please  
20 identify yourself when you speak. I think many -- most of you  
21 have your full name there. And when you speak, Jeseca will be  
22 able to tell that it's you. So I just ask that you do your  
23 best in that regard.

24 So why don't we start with appearances for the  
25 record. And what I'll do is call out who I believe is here by



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1 video Zoom link. And then I have a list of people who I  
2 believe are on the telephone who wish to make appearances as  
3 well. Those appearances have been made by e-mail and we'll  
4 convey that to Jeseca so that the record reflects your  
5 presence.

6 But I'll start with the LAN defendants. I believe  
7 that by video -- and please just say yes if I've got this  
8 right. We have Mr. Mason. And what you have to do is press  
9 the space bar to unmute. It's not working. I'll unmute you.  
10 Go ahead.

11 MR. MASON: Yes, Your Honor. This is Wayne. I got  
12 kicked off. I'm sorry.

13 THE COURT: Oh, okay. Feel free -- if something like  
14 that is happening, when you get back on, will you try to let  
15 us know. You can send a message, a chat. But you could also  
16 just -- you can also raise your hand by Zoom technology. In  
17 some way, try to let me know that we're having a problem. But  
18 thank you, Mr. Mason.

19 And Mr. Erickson. You're on? Pretty sure I've  
20 already heard -- there's Mr. Erickson. Can't hear you, Mr.  
21 Erickson. And you're not muted. Let's see. Oh, I see, Ms.  
22 Smith, what you're talking about with the pin. Oh, well. Mr.  
23 Erickson's on. We can see him. Mr. Campbell for VNA.

24 MR. CAMPBELL: Yes, Your Honor, I'm here.

25 THE COURT: Thank you. Mr. McDonald for McLaren?

1 MS. SMITH: Mr. McDonald is unable to attend the  
2 status conference. I'm here on behalf of McLaren. This is  
3 Susan Smith counsel for McLaren.

4 And while I have you, let me indicate that Mr.  
5 Erickson is using the chat function to indicate that he's  
6 present and not on mute. So the issue with being able to hear  
7 his audio must be on the Court's end.

8 THE COURT: Okay. And I am -- yeah. I'm very  
9 thankful that Josh Matta, the Court's IT director, is on this  
10 with us. So I'm going to see whether he can help sort that  
11 out.

12 So for the city defendants, Mr. Berg, are you on?

13 MR. BERG: Yes, Your Honor. Rick Berg here for the  
14 city defendants.

15 THE COURT: Okay. And is Mr. Kim also on or he's on  
16 by telephone? Okay. Is Alexander Rusek, are you on?

17 MR. RUSEK: Alexander Rusek. Good afternoon, Your  
18 Honor. I'm appearing for Mr. Croft and then also for the  
19 other individual city defendants today. And if you hear horns  
20 in the background, I live in downtown Lansing and there's a  
21 protest going on outside my front window right now. So I'll  
22 be on mute as much as possible.

23 THE COURT: Okay. I read about that protest.

24 So for Hurley Hospital, is Mr. Jensen on?

25 MR. JENSEN: Yes, Your Honor. Larry Jensen on behalf

1 of Hurley defendants.

2 THE COURT: Thank you. For MDEQ defendants, Mr.  
3 Barbieri.

4 MR. BARBIERI: Yes, Your Honor. Charles Barbieri for  
5 MDEQ defendants Patrick Cook and Michael Prysby along with the  
6 other MDEQ defendants.

7 THE COURT: Okay. And unless I get it wrong, feel  
8 free to just say yes. So it's Mr. Thompson on for Rowe?

9 MR. THOMPSON: Yes.

10 THE COURT: Thank you. For the State of Michigan,  
11 Ms. Bettenhausen?

12 MR. BETTENHAUSEN: Yes, Your Honor.

13 THE COURT: And Mr. Gambill?

14 MR. GAMBILL: Yes, I'm here, Your Honor.

15 THE COURT: Good. And co-liaison and individual  
16 plaintiffs' counsel, Mr. Shkolnik.

17 MR. SHKOLNIK: Good afternoon, Your Honor.

18 THE COURT: Hi. Mr. Stern.

19 MR. STERN: Yes, Your Honor.

20 THE COURT: Good. And Mr. Dawson.

21 MR. DAWSON: Yes, Your Honor.

22 THE COURT: Great. And you're on for the Brown  
23 cases?

24 MR. DAWSON: That is correct, Your Honor.

25 THE COURT: And Mr. Washington, are you with us?

1 MR. WASHINGTON: Yes, I am, Judge.

2 THE COURT: Great. Thank you. Welcome.

3 MR. WASHINGTON: Thank you.

4 THE COURT: Mr. Washington, could you name your  
5 client, please?

6 MR. WASHINGTON: I have the Anderson plaintiffs and I  
7 have the Joel Lee as my clients, Judge, in this litigation.

8 THE COURT: Good. And the interim class counsel, Mr.  
9 Leopold.

10 MR. LEOPOLD: Mr. Leopold is here, Your Honor.

11 THE COURT: And Mr. Pitt.

12 MR. PITT: Present, Your Honor. Good afternoon.

13 THE COURT: Hi. And for the EPA, Mr. Williams.

14 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Your Honor.

15 THE COURT: And I'd like to note that you are the  
16 second Mr. Michael Williams on this case. We have so many  
17 lawyers --

18 MR. WILLIAMS: I was hoping that I chose DOJ Williams  
19 to differentiate us, but it's a common name.

20 THE COURT: And then I think we're also joined by our  
21 Special Master Deborah Greenspan.

22 SPECIAL MASTER GREENSPAN: Yes, Your Honor.

23 THE COURT: Thank you. And of course we have Judge  
24 Farah and his law clerk Samantha Weinstein. And my law clerk  
25 Abigail. Another law clerk has assisted in having the folks

1 on the telephone join us.

2 On the telephone I have -- just one second. On the  
3 telephone I have that Alaina Devine, David Rogers, Jason  
4 Cohen, and Mr. Burdick are present. And then I believe Mr.  
5 Hart, are you also on the video?

6 MR. HART: Yes, Your Honor. David Hart for the  
7 Guertin plaintiffs.

8 THE COURT: Good. And there are at least five more  
9 people on the telephone who we're now aware of but I don't  
10 have all of your names. So we'll make sure that the record  
11 reflects everyone we know is present.

12 So I'd like to begin by asking Judge Farah if he  
13 would like to talk about any issues involved in the state  
14 court litigation.

15 THE HONORABLE JUDGE FARAH: Yes. Thank you, Judge.

16 I would like to just address the few pending motions  
17 that are in front of this Court. Not substantively, but  
18 rather we listed responses from the lawyers involved as to the  
19 process and procedure of handling the pending motions, many  
20 left over from prior judicial involvement.

21 We have prioritized the disqualification motion  
22 brought and joined in to have the Attorney General's office  
23 disqualified in all matters. That motion will be decided  
24 first after receiving your input. I've determined that motion  
25 will be decided on papers. There will not be an evidentiary

1 hearing nor will there be oral arguments.

2 The reasoning on that is, one, we have a hundred  
3 pages of briefing or more affidavits, citations galore. And  
4 secondarily, we don't know when we'd be able to have a live  
5 evidentiary hearing with the COVID-19 situation. Rather than  
6 hold things up, I think we need to get that one decided. We  
7 will decide it on papers and we are shooting for May the 6th  
8 for that decision to come out.

9 I'm bracketing that on the front end. On the back  
10 end is the motion for a change of venue. That will be decided  
11 most likely down the road, if at all.

12 In between, however, will be a series of motions for  
13 reconsideration on various orders previously entered by Judge  
14 Yuille. The court will issue an order emanating from today's  
15 conference that will embrace all these various processes on  
16 these various motions. And in that order most likely I will  
17 direct under our court rule that we have responses to the  
18 motion for reconsideration.

19 Other motions on our list will be in between those  
20 parameters and you'll get an order reflective of everything  
21 I've said by the end of this week by e-mail. Thank you, Judge  
22 Levy.

23 THE COURT: Great. Thank you, very much. And I  
24 can't thank you enough for being present. And also for  
25 inviting me to participate last month, which feels like a

1 lifetime ago, by telephone in your hearing that you had to  
2 begin to schedule some of this. Or I guess it was in  
3 chambers. "In chambers" meeting. So thank you.

4 The next issue on the discovery coordination was  
5 brought to my attention by co-liaison counsel and the LAN  
6 defendants. And it was a request to have some further  
7 discussion about coordination of discovery between -- let's  
8 see.

9 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIST MATTA: Sorry, Judge. We  
10 had some feedback. We got Mr. Erickson back online.

11 THE COURT: Thank you, Josh.

12 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIST MATTA: No problem.

13 THE COURT: I just received a message from Jason  
14 Cohen that Mr. Eric Rey and Mr. Cohen have joined us on behalf  
15 of the United States via Zoom. But that Mr. Williams will  
16 continue to speak on behalf of the Federal Government. That's  
17 just fine. Thank you Mr. Rey, R-E-Y, and Mr. Cohen,  
18 C-O-H-E-N.

19 So it was brought to my attention by co-liaison  
20 counsel and LAN defendants that they wish to have some further  
21 discussion about coordinating the discovery and the EPA's  
22 involvement in depositions.

23 So does someone want to identify the issue for  
24 co-liaison counsel first? And then I'll turn to the LAN  
25 defendants. And then Mr. Williams can respond.

1 MR. STERN: Your Honor, this is Corey Stern. I was  
2 one of the individuals who raised this issue.

3 The Meeks case was filed on November 13th, 2019. And  
4 it's been, you know, close to six months since it's been  
5 filed. And only recently I assume a request was made for  
6 underlying documents associated with those depositions. And  
7 it was never made to me as counsel for Meeks. I just heard it  
8 in the, you know, the preconference meeting that we had.

9 I believe co-liaison counsel for Judge Parker in her  
10 FTCA cases are Michael Pitt and Paul Napoli. It's my  
11 understanding that only Monday was there a conference with  
12 Judge Parker to discuss the viability and appropriateness of  
13 participation in the depositions that are taking place before  
14 this Court or in conjunction with this Court's CMO.

15 My understanding about the entry of complimentary  
16 case management orders starting back with Judge Yuille a year  
17 or year and a half ago, which at that time the parties to this  
18 case I believe attempted to get Judge Parker to join with some  
19 pushback by the EPA from what I understand. And so it's been  
20 -- you know, there's been a number of depositions that have  
21 taken place not just of plaintiffs but of defendants.

22 And Mr. Pitt respectfully opposes the consolidation  
23 of the Meeks case with the Walters case as well as with any  
24 other FDCA cases with the Walters case. And the EPA has never  
25 once asked me as counsel for the plaintiff in Meeks as far



1 back as November despite the public nature of this Court's  
2 case management order that attempts at least to coordinate  
3 discovery for every litigant so that depositions won't have to  
4 take place twice such that I genuinely believe regardless of  
5 what this Court does.

6 Whether this Court consolidates Meeks with Walters,  
7 keeps Meeks but doesn't consolidate it with Walters, sends  
8 Meeks to Judge Parker to be consolidated with the FDCA cases.  
9 Or maybe more drastically bring the FDCA cases over to, you  
10 know, be under Your Honor.

11 The way this is heading right now with the EPA is  
12 that there will likely be duplicate depositions that are going  
13 to be required because they are not participating in the  
14 depositions as they're moving forward. And so there was a  
15 deposition very recently of an employee of the State of  
16 Michigan, a former employee of the State of Michigan.

17 And a week in advance of that deposition I wrote to  
18 Mr. Williams. I wrote to Mr. Rey. I wrote to Mr. Cohen. And  
19 I said to them and I copied the entire executive committee for  
20 the defendants as well as interim lead counsel for the  
21 putative class and I suggested we have a meet and confer to  
22 discuss an allocation of time for the EPA because that's been  
23 such a hot issue before Your Honor.

24 I invited the EPA to, A, let us know if it was  
25 intending to attend that deposition. And then B what its

1 availability would be for discussion about an allocation of  
2 time. And they responded, the EPA, you know, respectfully  
3 that they had no intention of participating in that  
4 deposition.

5 During the pendency -- during that deposition, the  
6 VNA attorneys led that deposition because they noticed it.  
7 And then I followed the VNA defendants. And the testimony  
8 included some damning statements about the EPA's role in this  
9 litigation.

10 And if I was counsel for the EPA, I would have wanted  
11 to be there to follow-up, to ask my own questions, to figure  
12 out, you know, the background and foundational basis for this  
13 witness's testimony regarding EPA. But instead the EPA wasn't  
14 present despite me letting them know that I thought they ought  
15 to be and inviting them to be and offering to discuss the time  
16 allocations.

17 So earlier in the in conference meeting, which  
18 obviously wasn't on the record, the two issues that I believe  
19 the EPA have most glaringly with participation at this point  
20 is, one, they believe they don't have documents.

21 As far as I know, not until Monday was there a  
22 request made for those documents from Mr. Pitt who had no  
23 interest in these cases being consolidated with Walters, and  
24 from Mr. Napoli. And two, that if this case is transferred to  
25 Your Honor, the EPA intends to file a motion to dismiss.

1           The reality is is I imagine that the EPA's going to  
2 file the exact same motion to dismiss regardless of who the  
3 judge is on the case because I don't know why which judge is  
4 assigned to a case will determine whether a motion to dismiss  
5 would be filed. The reason a motion to dismiss would be filed  
6 would be because there's something about this case that they  
7 believe has not been pled appropriately irrespective of Judge  
8 Parker's order in the other FDCA cases.

9           So I understand it's not a perfect situation for the  
10 EPA. I'd be willing if Mr. Pitt and Napoli can't do it or the  
11 EPA feel that it's not being done fast enough, I'd be willing  
12 to give them the documents that they need to participate in  
13 these depositions. And I would expect that even those who  
14 oppose the consolidation would be very in favor of their  
15 participation so that they are not required to take the same  
16 depositions twice as well.

17           It's not as if I'm the only one that has, you know,  
18 issues with the EPA that are being discussed during these  
19 depositions. Mr. Leopold and Mr. Pitt for the putative class  
20 also have EPA claims that are before Judge Parker. But why  
21 they would want to take depositions twice doesn't make any  
22 sense to me.

23           So I'm not trying to take anyone's rights away or  
24 hamstring them with regard to what's available to them for the  
25 deposition, but there's got to be a way for the EPA to

1 participate in these depositions.

2 THE COURT: And Mr. Stern, I'll turn to LAN and then  
3 give Mr. Williams a chance to respond. But what we know from  
4 earlier today we had a what I call an in chambers off the  
5 record just work session on this case just trying to sort out  
6 some of these issues. And Mr. Williams told us that without  
7 the documents, he doesn't feel prepared. And of course I  
8 don't want a situation going on where people can sort of  
9 willfully not request documents and so on. I'm not suggesting  
10 that happened at all.

11 But we want all of these cases to proceed as  
12 efficiently and effectively as they can.

13 But what do you suggest doing about that, Mr. Stern?  
14 The fact is he didn't have the documents. And he also  
15 indicated that perhaps they don't even want to take Valerie  
16 Brader -- is that who -- that's who it was, Valerie Brader?

17 MR. STERN: Yes, Your Honor.

18 THE COURT: That they don't even want to take her  
19 deposition.

20 MR. STERN: I have no issue if -- I mean, in the  
21 correspondence that went back and forth between the EPA and me  
22 during the period prior to and subsequent to Ms. Brader's  
23 deposition, I didn't suggest that they necessarily have to  
24 take it again. I just suggested that in light of having been  
25 offered to sit in the deposition, to participate in the

1 deposition.

2           You know, when I sent the first e-mail saying, hey,  
3 we'd like to know if you're participating and our group would  
4 be willing to meet and confer so that you could have adequate  
5 time to participate during the deposition, not once did  
6 anybody respond to me and say, hey, we'd really like to  
7 participate but we don't have the documents and so we can't do  
8 it because we don't have the documents.

9           That was not the basis. Had that been the basis I  
10 would have had my IT people who run relativity do whatever  
11 they could as quickly as they could to get the documents that  
12 were acquired by the EPA.

13           And in fact if in November of 2019 when this case was  
14 originally assigned to Your Honor the EPA had looked at the  
15 docket and seen the consolidation, the discovery order, which  
16 they knew about because it had been raised prior to the filing  
17 of my case which ended up before Your Honor. They had known  
18 about it because Judge Parker at a minimum was considering  
19 entering an order that was similar to the coordination order  
20 that Judge Yuille ultimately had entered, I would have had no  
21 problem getting them any documents whatsoever. And that to me  
22 is not a reason not to participate because those documents can  
23 easily be transmitted to them.

24           THE COURT: Okay. And for LAN.

25           MR. ERICKSON: Yes, Your Honor. Can you hear me?

1 THE COURT: I can.

2 MR. ERICKSON: So our -- we put the issue on the  
3 agenda also. Our concern was just the same general concern  
4 that we've been raising going back several months, probably  
5 five or six months. And that is simply that the purpose of  
6 the discovery coordination order was to seek to ensure as much  
7 as possible the depositions be taken only once.

8 And for many months the answer was, well, we can't do  
9 anything with the EPA cases right now because the motion to  
10 dismiss is pending. And then that decision was made and the  
11 case was still there. And then I heard that there was a  
12 discovery coordination order entered in those cases.

13 And I have not seen that order myself. So I don't  
14 know the details. But I assume it's a complimentary order  
15 like what was entered in state court. And then I didn't  
16 anybody participating from the EPA at any of the depositions  
17 and thought that it was something that should be on the agenda  
18 and discussed.

19 And so my concern is just a generalized concern that  
20 we, like all the parties, don't want our witnesses to be  
21 deposed more than once. And we don't want to have to take --  
22 you know, we don't want to have to come back for other  
23 depositions more than once. And I think Mr. Stern's example  
24 in the Brader example is probably a good one to lead the  
25 discussion.

1 THE COURT: Okay. Thank you. One of the challenges  
2 here is that I have not made a decision on whether to keep the  
3 Meeks case and combine it with Walters or send it to Judge  
4 Parker. The one thing that I don't have any authority to do  
5 and would not and just simply cannot do is bring Judge  
6 Parker's cases into -- onto my docket.

7 So Mr. Williams, do you want to respond? And I have  
8 really no authority over the United States in this case at  
9 this time. There's not either a motion to dismiss pending or  
10 an answer in the case.

11 But I think -- you are an officer of the court and I  
12 think it's in that spirit that Mr. Stern and Mr. Erickson are  
13 to just simply make progress in this litigation. And you are  
14 late to the game. You were sued later and so on. And the  
15 Meeks case was only filed in November.

16 So can you -- I guess what I'm just looking for is a  
17 representation that once you get these documents, if you're in  
18 the litigation in my court, that you'll be doing everything  
19 you can to get up to speed so that you will not duplicate  
20 depositions.

21 These individuals, defendants, plaintiffs have been  
22 in this litigation a very long time. Everyone wants to move  
23 on with their lives and not spend time preparing and sitting  
24 in depositions over and over and over that can be avoided.

25 MR. WILLIAMS: I'm happy to respond to several points

1 that were raised here, Your Honor. I think I'm no longer on  
2 mute.

3 The first point asking for representation from DOJ,  
4 the answer is yes. We fully expect to have discovery  
5 coordinated between the different judges who have docketed  
6 cases. So we have a complimentary discovery coordination  
7 order before Judge Parker. It was largely inspired or copied  
8 by your prior order. It's entirely consistent with it. I  
9 think her order is consistent with yours.

10 To the extent as we pursue common discovery in these  
11 dockets, the FDCA docket, your civil rights docket, to the  
12 extent we have disputes about depositions or documents, I  
13 expect and happy to be available to resolve any disputes that  
14 might come up. So the representation is definitely there.

15 It's also consistent with the language of the  
16 discovery coordination order entered by Judge Parker on March  
17 3, 2020, ECF 112. We're not looking to have anyone sit more  
18 than once for depositions. It's one of the highlights of the  
19 discovery coordination protocol orders. Not looking to have  
20 people be unduly burdened by discovery. The opposite.

21 We're looking to be efficient and to coordinate and  
22 the complimentary discovery coordination protocol orders are  
23 the cure for making sure that that happens.

24 Several other points were raised. I'd like to  
25 comment, if I may. I think we're in agreement that the



1 consolidation of Meeks is a separate issue. It's not a  
2 discovery coordination issue.

3           Apart from that we have discovery coordination issues  
4 coming up here on a couple of fronts. First one is about  
5 whether or not DOJ should be attending depositions of third  
6 parties or parties who have not yet -- defendants who have not  
7 yet answered under your case management provision. So this  
8 was not addressed for the first time in our telephonic hearing  
9 before Judge Parker on Monday. It was first addressed at our  
10 November 15th, 2019, case management conference where all of  
11 the plaintiff's counsel MDOJ were present including a lawyer  
12 from Mr. Stern's firm and we talked about a variety of issues  
13 about what we need to do to get the case rolling on the merits  
14 front.

15           One of those items was developing a mutually  
16 agreeable discovery coordination protocol and a mutually  
17 agreeable case management order that has a bellwether process.  
18 Between November 15th and close to New Year's 2019 we  
19 negotiated both documents. Discovery coordination protocol  
20 and case management order.

21           They were submitted to Judge Parker as agreed orders  
22 all counsel of record January 15th. Both orders were entered  
23 by Judge Parker on March 2, 2020. So the specific issue of  
24 when EPA would participate in depositions or other discovery  
25 in the cases before Your Honor is specifically addressed in

1 the order.

2 The plan was, in short, to have plaintiff's counsel  
3 give us what we're calling here I think all of the documents  
4 which includes -- it's specified in the order. Interrogatory  
5 answers from transcript production yields. Also deposition  
6 transcripts. All of the materials.

7 So we've been waiting pretty patiently for all of  
8 those materials to be compiled. We've conferred about it  
9 prior to the hearing before Judge Parker on Monday. We're  
10 told that plaintiffs' liaison counsel for the FDCA cases has a  
11 contractor who's doing the work to compile all the materials.

12 For me, that's acceptable. There's a process in  
13 place. We've had some COVID limitations in March and April  
14 obviously. So we reported to Judge Parker on Monday a plan is  
15 in place to get those materials to us. And when we have them  
16 we'll need some time to review them, but we certainly plan to  
17 review them. And then to the extent necessary plan to  
18 participate in other discovery and depositions.

19 It may very well be our team does not need to ask for  
20 additional deposition time of anyone who's been deposed  
21 before, especially for the individual defendants. Footnoting,  
22 putting aside the plaintiffs, I know that you and Mr. Rey  
23 talked about plaintiffs' specific jurisdictional issues. So  
24 maybe we should leave that there. I think pertains to the  
25 Meeks consolidation issue.

1           But with respect to the parties who have not yet  
2 answered that discovery, we'll even make an assessment if  
3 necessary. That phenomenon of our requesting leave to  
4 re-depose certain people for a certain amount of time, it's  
5 specifically addressed in our discovery coordination protocol.

6           This was negotiation that happened Christmas to New  
7 Year's. Mr. Stern was invited. He chose not to attend.  
8 Okay. We agreed to it by all of the lawyers in those cases.  
9 Napoli, Shkolnik, Michael Pitt, everyone else. It's page 11  
10 section 2GA.

11           We have -- once we have a certification -- that's the  
12 term we use. Certification that you've given us all of the  
13 documents. That term meaning is pretty broad. It actually is  
14 inspired by language you had used in your prior discovery  
15 coordination protocol or perhaps Judge Yuille.

16           Once we have those names, we'll make an assessment if  
17 we do need to participate in other depositions in the docket  
18 before Your Honor.

19           Secondly --

20           MR. MASON: Can I address --

21           MR. WILLIAMS: -- [Inaudible] EPA depositions. We  
22 have dates on the calendar. We've negotiated those with  
23 counsel who requested those depositions. I don't mean to  
24 speak out of turn. Is it Mr. Mason?

25           MR. MASON: I'd like to speak if I could. I didn't

1 mean to interrupt you though. I'm sorry.

2 THE COURT: Go ahead, Mr. Mason.

3 MR. MASON: So let me say I've known Mike Williams  
4 for years and I have great respect for him. So this is not --  
5 my comments are not directed at him as an individual, but just  
6 the status of where we sit.

7 And my only concern is the concern of the  
8 coordination and not doing this more than once. But this  
9 issue of documents, the EPA has been involved in this and  
10 aware of the litigation for many years, Your Honor.

11 And the fact is to now suggest that they now need  
12 documents when taking no effort to be up to speed knowing that  
13 this day and these days coming and the need to coordinate is  
14 coming, I just -- I struggle with this because the reality is  
15 it's not like they're brand new to the case and new and need  
16 something.

17 They've been aware of this and have based on my view  
18 have chosen to put their head in the sand a little bit about  
19 it instead of being proactive and get what they need and know  
20 that they need it so that they can participate like everybody  
21 else. And so strategically if that's been the case, it's  
22 water under the bridge. But we need to get on with it. They  
23 need to get what they need and participate so that we have no  
24 question about needing to ask for more or re-deposing people.

25 THE COURT: And Mr. Mason, what do you suggest that I

1 do? What I'm interested in seeing is as long as I have  
2 Meeks -- and I'll sort out a decision soon on that -- I'd like  
3 to know when that certification is going to be provided that  
4 all of the documents have been provided to EPA. And I guess  
5 that's not a question for you, Mr. Mason. It would be for Mr.  
6 Stern or -- who is it who's supposed to --

7 MR. STERN: Your Honor, this is Corey Stern. First  
8 of all, it's supposed to be Mr. Pitt and Mr. Napoli who are  
9 providing the documents.

10 Number two, of course I was invited to conferences  
11 and meetings about discovery before Judge Parker. But I  
12 didn't have a case before Judge Parker. And a lot's been made  
13 about how long I waited to file FDCA case against the EPA.  
14 I'm not sure why the EPA waited from November until late  
15 February or March to file a motion to consolidate. And so at  
16 every meeting I ever participated in, I repeatedly said --

17 THE COURT: I don't care about any of that actually.  
18 I don't care about any of that. It doesn't even matter to me.

19 MR. STERN: So it's Mr. Pitt and Mr. Shkolnik -- Mr.  
20 Pitt and Mr. Napoli who were supposed to certify to the EPA  
21 the documents had been produced. And that's under the  
22 authority of Judge Parker.

23 THE COURT: Okay. So let me ask Mr. Pitt. Mr. Pitt  
24 --

25 MR. PITT: Yes, Your Honor.

1 THE COURT: When will you be able to provide that  
2 certification?

3 MR. PITT: We should be able to do it early next  
4 week. We have a vendor that has all of the discovery  
5 documents on a document platform. We have been told that with  
6 proper security and firewalls established, the DOJ will be  
7 given an access code to that database that will exclude  
8 plaintiffs' work product, of course, so that they would have  
9 access to all of the documents that we have assembled over the  
10 last three years all in one place and they would have, you  
11 know, word search ability.

12 It would be user friendly to the nth degree and they  
13 would have full access to it. And we're in contact with our  
14 vendor today just to find out where we're at. And I was told  
15 by the end of the week, early next week all the firewall  
16 safeguards will be put in place. And we can just e-mail to  
17 Mr. Williams, Mr. Rey, and Mr. Cohen the access code and they  
18 will then have all of the documents that we have.

19 THE COURT: Okay. Thank you. So Mr. Williams,  
20 knowing that, I'm not very interested in reviewing a lot of  
21 history of who attended what and when things happened that  
22 don't relate to what we're trying to sort out. Not that you  
23 were going to do that, but I'm just saying that for everybody.

24 Knowing that you'll have the documents by the end of  
25 next week, do you anticipate being able to get started

1 attending depositions or waiving your presence? You don't  
2 have to take anyone's deposition or observe a deposition if  
3 you don't want to.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: Happy to respond, Your Honor. So I  
5 haven't seen the materials yet. So it's a black box to a  
6 certain degree. I'm very interested in seeing them.  
7 [Inaudible] initial assessment I think and relatively quickly.

8 I think there is one more point that I think is very  
9 relevant to what you're focusing on now. And the information  
10 --

11 THE COURT: Mr. Williams, sometimes your voice is  
12 going out. It's a little bit in and out. So here's a  
13 solution --

14 MR. WILLIAMS: Is this any better if I move my  
15 headset?

16 THE COURT: I think it might be. But can you also  
17 try to speak a little slower? Because when you're going out,  
18 I have a feeling my court reporter can start to figure out  
19 what you're saying if you go a little slower.

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you, your Honor. I think  
21 I talked about the first part of that how we're [Inaudible]  
22 interested in -- maybe I'll try to ditch the headset.

23 THE COURT: Yeah. That might be necessary.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Is that any better, Your Honor? It is  
25 better.

1 THE COURT: Good.

2 MR. WILLIAMS: So on the first part we're interested  
3 in seeing the documents, the written discovery depositions.  
4 We'll assess it as quickly as practicable. We don't know the  
5 scope of it.

6 The second point I think is what we're considering  
7 here is in part based on what Mr. Mason is talking about. The  
8 EPA depositions, we have offered a date [Inaudible] rule.  
9 Specifically we are familiar with EPA's documents. We have  
10 been doing this for some time. We're not seeking to delay  
11 things in any way. We have dates -- we had dates on the  
12 calendar in April through July for 10 EPA depositions.

13 Sorry. Have I lost you?

14 THE COURT: No. You're still going in and out a  
15 little bit. It's okay. Just a minute.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: So my point is, we have scheduled 10  
17 EPA depositions. We're not looking to slow things down at  
18 all. We had to navigate COVID concerns in April for one  
19 witness. She was rescheduled for June or July.

20 But on the state's documents, for example, the  
21 discovery responses, we've never received them. And we raised  
22 it in conference November 15th. It's taken some time. It  
23 hasn't happened yet. It sounds like it's going to be  
24 happening soon. We're very interested. Not looking to delay.  
25 And as to [Inaudible] those are my answers, Your Honor.



1 THE COURT: Thank you. I think it's the best we can  
2 do at this point -- Mr. Williams, are you on --

3 MR. WILLIAMS: I'm not hearing you, Your Honor.

4 THE COURT: Are you on by telephone and --

5 MR. WILLIAMS: No, Your Honor. This is purely on my  
6 DOJ laptop. I'm not currently on the phone.

7 THE COURT: Okay. All right. Thank you. I'm  
8 hearing feedback. Unless Mr. Stern, Mr. Mason, Mr. Erickson,  
9 whoever has spoken has a specific proposal that I can take  
10 into consideration, I think the issue has been laid out for  
11 what the concern is. Mr. Williams has heard it. He's  
12 responded. And it's my inclination that we move on from  
13 there.

14 But Mr. Stern, do you have anything further on this?

15 MR. STERN: Only that, you know, within a few days I  
16 think of either filing the motion to consolidate or Your Honor  
17 hearing the motion, the EPA did, in fact, file notices of  
18 nonparty fault that include many of the defendants that are  
19 before Your Honor.

20 And so it's not just a matter of nonparties who have  
21 not yet answered. I mean, there's just -- you know, it's fine  
22 with me. It doesn't matter to me. But I think the option  
23 should be available. And I think if the opportunity to depose  
24 some of these folks isn't taken for whatever reason, it should  
25 at least be considered down the road at a point in time where

1 the EPA moves to re-depose individuals.

2 THE COURT: Okay. Well, a record has been made now  
3 of the concern and I think we should move on.

4 MS. SMITH: Your Honor?

5 THE COURT: Yes.

6 MS. SMITH: I'm sorry. This is Susan Smith. I  
7 simply want to flag a concern.

8 Early on when Your Honor issued an order requiring  
9 counsel to register on your docket to ensure we all were  
10 notified and events were occurring, having now heard what's  
11 happening with Judge Parker's docket, I'm interested in  
12 knowing if there is a mechanism by which lawyers for parties  
13 who were made named in this nonparty at fault but are not  
14 litigants in Judge Parker's cases can be apprised of what's  
15 occurring on that docket other than [Inaudible].

16 For example, if there are depositions to be noted in  
17 the cases before Judge Parker, how is it that -- is there a  
18 communication tool that we have that will inform everybody  
19 else what's occurring so we can opt in to participate if  
20 needed?

21 THE COURT: That's a very good question. And I would  
22 recommend to the parties that the case management order before  
23 Judge Parker, that the parties suggest implementing such a  
24 protocol. There's probably no authority that I have to do  
25 that, although I can communicate the request to Judge Parker

1 and brainstorm some ideas for it.

2 MS. SMITH: I'm concerned if they proceed with  
3 depositions that they view as relevant only to their  
4 litigation and the rest of us aren't aware of it, that that  
5 may then raise the need for duplication.

6 MR. STERN: So the one --

7 MS. SMITH: I haven't seen the [Inaudible] entered in  
8 the Parker cases so I don't know that it calls for that type  
9 of mechanism.

10 MR. STERN: This is for the court reporter. This is  
11 Corey Stern.

12 So I was ordered -- I'm not sure how. But I was  
13 ordered by Judge Parker to make an appearance in Meeks -- I'm  
14 sorry. In the consolidated FDCA cases during the pendency of  
15 one of the motions that was filed. And as a result of my  
16 appearance on behalf of an interested party or the nonparty, I  
17 have begun getting pleadings from the FDCA cases.

18 And so it may not be the most efficient thing for  
19 anybody to do. But if you file an entry of appearance on  
20 behalf of an interested party in the \*Burgess FDCA  
21 consolidated cases, I believe all pleadings are being entered  
22 on that docket. Whether notices of depositions are being  
23 filed on the docket, I haven't seen any. And typically  
24 they're not. So it does raise a concern involving that.

25 But perhaps the parties who are all on this call

1 anyway can agree that any time a noticed deposition take  
2 place, they will file it on the docket for the benefit of all  
3 of us who are presently nonparties to that litigation. That  
4 may solve that problem.

5 MS. SMITH: Well, I --

6 THE COURT: You know I'm a little concerned that I  
7 think the Court may automatically strike notices of discovery.  
8 I think our clerks office may block those as prohibited  
9 filings. There's got to be a way around that.

10 But I guess what I would ask in the interest of  
11 everyone's time -- there are 38 people on the Zoom link and  
12 another good 10 or more on the telephone -- that the parties  
13 to the \*Burgess combined cases get together and see if there's  
14 something that can be done. Because it will serve no one's  
15 interest to repeat depositions that don't need to be repeated.  
16 And where it can be avoided.

17 So to that end, I have set aside three additional  
18 dates for discovery dispute resolutions. And that's April  
19 29th -- I'm sorry. Just two. April 29th at 2:00 PM and May  
20 6th at 2:00 PM. I anticipate using Zoom technology for that  
21 as well.

22 So then I wanted to just indicate that I will by the  
23 end of the week make a decision on the motion for extension of  
24 time filed by Mr. Shkolnik in response to the MDEQ motions to  
25 dismiss.

1 I also learned earlier today that the City of Flint  
2 may have some similar motions that they will be filing and I  
3 would just ask that you hold off on filing those motions until  
4 I've made a decision in the MDEQ motion or the motion for  
5 additional time I guess is what I need. I won't be deciding  
6 the motions. I'll be deciding the motion for additional time  
7 filed by Mr. Shkolnik.

8 The other thing is that now that the Brown and Marble  
9 decisions have been made, we have additional legionella cases  
10 where those decisions need to be applied if they apply. I  
11 have six -- I've identified six of them with the assistance of  
12 my law clerk, Abigail DeHart.

13 And in several of them, the allegation is legionella  
14 exposure but it's not clear whether the plaintiff ultimately  
15 came down with legionella disease and suffered damages. One  
16 in such case is 20-10330 filed by Robert Giroux, who I don't  
17 know if he's on the telephone.

18 But there's also -- I think Mr. Shkolnik, you may  
19 have a case, 17-12153, where there's allegations of legionella  
20 exposure. And I just have not looked closely enough to know  
21 whether there's legionnaires disease or whether there is a  
22 cause of action for exposure without coming down with  
23 legionnaires pneumonia.

24 MR. SHKOLNIK: Judge Levy, if I can -- we're double  
25 checking. We may have checked the wrong box and it may not be

1 exposure. It may, in fact, be the diagnosis of legionnaire is  
2 what I think it is. But I don't want to make that  
3 representation for sure. But we're double checking. I don't  
4 believe it was exposure to legionnaire -- legionella.

5 THE COURT: All right. What I'll do though is  
6 there's going to be some additional work done by Debra  
7 Greenspan to make sure we know the whole universe of  
8 legionnaires cases, legionella cases.

9 So once that's done I'll set a briefing schedule for  
10 motions to be filed. And the plan will be to apply the  
11 decision essentially in Marble and Brown to the extent of it  
12 applies. And what I would want in those briefs, everyone is  
13 preserving all of those arguments.

14 Lawyers always need to preserve arguments and I  
15 understand that. But what I'll really want is to know why  
16 these cases are different if they are and should be treated  
17 differently. And I think the key area where that could apply  
18 is in the bodily integrity count in terms of when the  
19 individual suffered from legionnaires disease.

20 So I'll set that very soon. I'll sort that out.

21 And now I think we're up to the point in the agenda  
22 where Debra Greenspan will give us an update on the work that  
23 she's been doing, which I think is quite significant.

24 Debra, are you there still?

25 SPECIAL MASTER GREENSPAN: I am. Hopefully you can

1 hear me. I unmuted.

2 THE COURT: Good.

3 SPECIAL MASTER GREENSPAN: Thank you, your Honor.  
4 I'm going to give a report on the claim data analysis and  
5 collection that you continue to talk about at each one of  
6 these status conferences.

7 I am preparing to file what I'm calling the third  
8 interim report on the collection of claim data. The second  
9 report was filed in September. So this is about a six month  
10 interval in the following sense.

11 The data that is being reported on in this third  
12 interim report is as of March 7th. So it's approximately 6  
13 months since the last report. Obviously we have a bit more  
14 data since the time I cut it off for purposes of this. But  
15 let me just give you a couple of highlights. And again, I  
16 plan to file this by the end of the week.

17 THE COURT: And can you talk just a little bit  
18 slower?

19 SPECIAL MASTER GREENSPAN: Oh I'm sorry. Okay.

20 THE COURT: Go ahead.

21 SPECIAL MASTER GREENSPAN: I just want to repeat that  
22 I plan to file it by the end of the week. And it again  
23 collects data as of March 7th.

24 So since our last report, we have slightly under  
25 2,000 newly retained clients reported by plaintiffs' counsel.

1 So in that period, we've gained close to 2,000 additional  
2 people. There are still some issues with duplicate claims.  
3 And so I'm not giving you -- those have to be worked out. But  
4 basically in our raw data, we have another 2,000 or so people  
5 retained counsel.

6 So that brings us to about 21,587 individuals who've  
7 retained counsel. There's another 11,000 or so who have been  
8 listed in the data as contacts. Meaning they have a  
9 relationship or some sort of contact relationship with a law  
10 firm. And so they have been listed and we've collected that  
11 data as well.

12 Important just other highlights that the report will  
13 include, the kind of charts and tables that I've included in  
14 prior reports. It breaks the individuals down by the times  
15 that they're asserting. Whether it's a personal injury claim,  
16 a wrongful death claim, a business claim.

17 It breaks the group of people down by age. So we  
18 have date of birth basically. So I have approximately it's in  
19 the neighborhood of 37 to 40 percent of the people in this  
20 report are under 18. And I'm counting under 18 as of the date  
21 of exposure. So we're using a period that's 2014 to 2016 for  
22 that purpose.

23 We have charts on the injuries that people are  
24 claiming. I don't think it is -- I don't think anyone should  
25 view it as the end, in the ending and final injuries. But I



1 have -- just so it's clear because of the discussion that  
2 we've had so far today, we have -- I have 103 people who've  
3 asserted legionella claims in this data. So they had not all  
4 filed cases. But they have been presented claims in this  
5 process.

6 I also just want to note just again for purposes of  
7 understanding what we have in terms of the individuals that  
8 have come forward versus the individuals who filed claims,  
9 it's only about 25 percent of the people who've come forward  
10 in these reports who have actually filed cases.

11 So it's -- so we don't have cases for a lot of  
12 people. We have people who've identified themselves. They  
13 haven't filed an actual lawsuit.

14 Now I do want to mention that since March 7th, I've  
15 received a substantial amount of additional data from  
16 plaintiffs' firms. So I will be reporting on that at our next  
17 status conference. But I believe we have more claims that  
18 have been -- that have come forward and retained counsel than  
19 we had for this current report. And we have a lot of other  
20 additional updates.

21 I get updates constantly. Sometimes they are  
22 clarifications. Sometimes they are supplementing information  
23 that we have previously requested. And the counsel has just  
24 been able to ascertain the information. So again, it's a  
25 moving -- it's constantly moving.

1           We have, again, also in our -- in these charts, we  
2 have information about people who've obtained blood lead level  
3 testing and what those results are and how many people have  
4 reported on them. Again, I want to emphasize just because  
5 it's not in there doesn't mean somebody hasn't had a blood  
6 test. I can only report on what has been provided to me. We  
7 also have data on water testing at people whose homes have had  
8 their water tested for the presence of lead. And we have all  
9 of that data reflected in this report as well.

10           So when it is filed, I think everybody will be able  
11 to read it. And certainly if there are other kinds of  
12 information that will be useful to the Court or to the  
13 parties, we can certainly put that together or evaluate  
14 whether it's possible to put it together in a straightforward  
15 manner or with the data that we already have.

16           And I certainly welcome any questions from anybody  
17 about the data in the report or how best to report on the  
18 data. So that's all I have for today.

19           THE COURT: Thank you, very much. I had to unmute  
20 myself. And I've seen a draft of this report. And it is  
21 remarkably detailed. I think it will help everyone  
22 enormously. And as Debra say, it's only as accurate as the  
23 reporting that she receives.

24           So I just ask that everybody continue to focus on  
25 getting accurate data to Ms. Greenspan because it's a very

1 valuable source of what has happened and where we are. And I  
2 think it can be used in a variety of important ways. So thank  
3 you very much for all of the work that went into that.

4 Are there any questions for Ms. Greenspan? Okay. I  
5 don't see any. Okay.

6 Well, I also have for decision a smaller issue which  
7 is a request by class plaintiffs for the Court to issue  
8 letters rogatory regarding a deposition they wish to take in  
9 France. And so I will be addressing that. I'll take a look  
10 at whether I want a reply brief. Initially I thought that  
11 wouldn't be necessary and probably it still will not be  
12 necessary. But if it is, I'll issue an order and let you  
13 know.

14 The next status conference will be Wednesday, May  
15 20th, 2:00 PM. The current agenda for this conference  
16 indicates that it will be in Ann Arbor Michigan. And I  
17 sincerely believe it will need to be done by video  
18 teleconference and telephone conference call.

19 So if we -- let's assume that for this -- at this  
20 time. I don't think people should start making reservations  
21 to fly in here at all. So I'll set up the technology and send  
22 out the notice well ahead of time.

23 So is there anything else to be addressed at this  
24 time? Okay. Hearing nothing, thank you, all, very much.  
25 Stay home, stay safe, and stay healthy. And that will

1 conclude our meeting and court is adjourned.

2 (Proceedings Concluded)

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7 CERTIFICATE OF OFFICIAL COURT REPORTER

8 I, Jeseca C. Eddington, Federal Official Court  
9 Reporter, do hereby certify the foregoing 44 pages are a true  
10 and correct transcript of the above entitled proceedings.

11 /s/ JESECA C. EDDINGTON 5/8/2020  
12 Jeseca C. Eddington, RDR, RMR, CRR, FCRR Date

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