

Foreword

The spread of the new coronavirus in the spring of 2020 upended nearly every aspect of life as we know it. On March 11, as contagion traversed the globe with shocking speed, scale, and severity, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

That same day, Columbia Law School began moving our entire curriculum online—more than 300 courses—for the first time in our history. Not only did we transform our teaching, but our faculty also turned its gaze outward, to the plight of individuals and communities in the United States and elsewhere facing new and urgent challenges wrought by the pandemic.

Against this backdrop, a group of colleagues joined forces to publish an e-book addressing myriad legal questions the coronavirus pandemic would introduce. Scholars across the faculty drew on their deep expertise to identify and examine a range of vital legal issues implicated by COVID-19. They were joined in this effort by a few academics from other schools. What's more, Columbia Law students jumped at the opportunity to participate.

Mindful of the need to match the fast-moving impact of the virus, our professors worked at record speed to turn their analyses and insights into the essays that make up this collection. After just one month, we present, “Law in the Time of COVID-19”. Covering a host of timely topics, including prisoners’ rights, elections, privacy, public health law, *force majeure* in contracts, bankruptcy, and more, we believe this reference guide may be the first of its kind produced by a law school.

Columbia Law School offers these insights to the legal community and the public as our contribution to understanding and confronting the profound disruption to our society and our legal system of COVID-19.

I am grateful to my colleague, Katharina Pistor, for her foresight and fortitude in launching this e-book project, and deeply appreciative of all those who contributed to this important undertaking. We hope you will find it valuable.

Gillian Lester

Dean and the Lucy G. Moses Professor of Law

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April 20, 2020