

District of Columbia Court of Appeals  
Remote Videoconference Oral Argument Protocols for Participants  
May 21, 2020

**Introduction:**

The District of Columbia Court of Appeals will begin conducting remote oral arguments via video conferencing using the Zoom government platform, which has enhanced security features. Remote oral arguments will ensure continued access to justice and fair and timely case resolution, while protecting the health and safety of the workforce and the public.

We are providing these participant protocols for your review and encourage you to prepare, practice, — when the inevitable glitches arise — exercise patience. This is new technology and there will be a learning curve for all of us.

**Technical Instructions:**

- You may connect to the oral argument using a device with a camera--desktop or laptop computer, tablet, or smart phone.
- If you are unfamiliar with Zoom videoconferencing software, many resources are available. Zoom provides a [Quick Start Guide](#) that explains how to register for a zoom account and how to join a test meeting to check your audio and video. YouTube is another resource for video tutorials regarding Zoom. You may type “Zoom tutorial for beginners” into the search box to find a list of tutorials.
- You may review Zoom training and support materials at <https://www.Zoom.us>. Unfortunately, the Court is not able to provide you with technical assistance for troubleshooting connection problems.
- We recommend that you test your equipment’s microphone and speaker controls and your internet connection prior to the oral argument. Directions may be found at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362313-How-Do-I-Test-My-Video>.
- You should have a good LAN, Wi-Fi, or substantial LTE connection to ensure a quality connection.
- Both counsel arguing the case and counsel sitting as second chair may participate in the zoom call, but information for both must be provided to the

Clerk's Office in advance of oral argument. (As in an in-person oral argument, counsel sitting as second chair will not have an opportunity to speak and should have their microphone and camera off for the duration of oral argument.)

### **Best Practices:**

- The remote argument is an official court. Appropriate conduct and attire are required.
- When joining the Virtual Courtroom by video, your display name should indicate your name and who you represent (e.g., "Jane Smith, for appellant"). Instructions for changing your display name are available at: <https://support.palcs.org/hc/en-us/articles/226794367-Changing-Your-Display-Name-in-Zoom-Rooms>.
- If you are unable to use video, for phone participation, you must notify the Clerk's Office in advance of the phone number you will use by calling (202) 879-2707.
- You should participate from a private, quiet room that is free of disruptions. When you are not arguing or answering the Judges' questions, please put your microphone on mute.
- Lighting in the room should be overhead or in front of you; warm-hued lights look best. Avoid side lighting, backlighting, and sunlit windows that illuminate surfaces unevenly.
- Zoom has a virtual background feature by which you may use a photograph as your background. The court will provide a background of the courtroom which we encourage participants to use if possible. For best results and to avoid blurring between the litigant's features and the background, have a blank wall/surface immediately behind you. Please test this feature. Zoom provides instructions for using virtual backgrounds at <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Virtual-Background> and system requirements at [https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360043484511#h\\_1d44b8c6-0031-4c8a-9300-8c1a722ba057](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360043484511#h_1d44b8c6-0031-4c8a-9300-8c1a722ba057). If you are unable to use the court provided virtual background, please choose a simple background.
- Place the camera on your computer, laptop, or mobile device at eye level and at approximately an arm length's distance. If you use a mobile device, it should

be mounted on a stationary, upright surface. You are not required to stand during your argument.

An example of a videoconference oral argument from the Texas Supreme Court is available at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29VN8\\_UCgIs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29VN8_UCgIs)