

Preparing to Participate in a Zoom Video Conference

Updated 7/29/20

Important: Any recording of a court proceeding held by video or teleconference, including “screen-shots” or other visual copying of a hearing, is absolutely prohibited. Violation of these prohibitions may result in sanctions.

If you will be a **case participant** in a Zoom video conference with the court (i.e., an attorney, witness, case party, etc.), please follow the guidance below, as adequate preparation and testing of the system will help ensure a good experience for everyone involved. Case participants will receive login information directly from the court. Login information is **not public** and must not be shared with anyone other than the appearing attorneys and other direct participants in the court proceeding.

The court will not provide technical support for Zoom participants or attendees. Please contact the [Zoom Help Center](#), your local IT support, or other online guidance.

Recommendations

1. Connect to the Zoom conference early. The Judge or chambers may be monitoring the waiting room for attendees and will admit participants when the hearing begins. If you arrive late, you may be left in the waiting room for some time.
2. Mute your phone, and mute all sounds from all other applications (email notifications, chat messaging, etc.).
3. Avoid using a mobile device if possible. Although tablets (iPads) and smartphones can be used, they are very limited, and the performance is inferior.
4. Avoid using battery power only (laptops, etc.). Plug into a good power source while in a Zoom meeting.
5. Unless you’ve confirmed the quality is sufficient, avoid using an open microphone and speakers, such as those that are built-into laptops or a webcams. Using a good quality headset (headphones with mic) will often help ensure you can be heard and can hear others with maximum quality.
6. Avoid noisy and echoing locations. Use of a headset will improve audio quality when this is unavoidable.
7. Avoid poor camera positioning (if possible). Try to frame yourself so you take up most the screen, at eye level. Check that the camera view captures only what you want others to see.
8. Check your background and do your best to eliminate or minimize anything in the background that might be distracting to the participants, such as a window with distracting glare. The Court understands, however, that you may have limited options in your remote setting.

Zoom has the ability to use a virtual background that can hide what is behind you. The following court-approved backgrounds are available for use during a court proceeding.

To download the courtroom backgrounds, click on the links below, then right-click on the image and select “save image as” to save it to your device. After saving the images, [click here](#) for the instructions on how to create and select a virtual background in Zoom.

[Minneapolis Courthouse Virtual Background](#)

[St Paul Courthouse Virtual Background](#)

[Duluth Courthouse Virtual Background](#)

9. Avoid unnecessary movement on camera, which may be distracting to other participants. Do not walk around with the camera view on if you are trying to get better reception during a hearing. Mute your video if you need to make adjustments or move locations.
10. Watch for Zoom chat messages from Chambers Staff or the Judge.
11. When you are brought into the meeting, wait for the Court staff and Judge to get situated. Do not speak up until you are invited to speak.
12. After appearances are noted, the Judge may ask lawyers who are not arguing or otherwise speaking up at the hearing to turn off their video feed. Participants who have joined the video meeting will still be able to see and hear, but the Judge will have fewer individuals to watch.
13. Avoid using WiFi if possible. Connection via a hard-wire Ethernet cable will always be faster and more reliable than WiFi. If you must use WiFi, make sure you are in close range.
14. Avoid running any unnecessary applications besides Zoom, to conserve your computer’s processing power and networking.
15. Counsel should wear courtroom appropriate attire if they are appearing on video.
16. Your Zoom name will appear in the video box during the hearing or court conference. Ideally, use your first and last name as your Zoom name for a court appearance. You can rename yourself in Zoom, if necessary, to make it easier for the judge or court reporter to identify you during the hearing.
17. Practice with others to test your connection and audio quality.
18. For home networks, if possible, avoid sharing your internet service with others during the session.
19. Do not use Air Pods or other wireless Bluetooth earbuds. The audio quality through Zoom is inferior.