Remote (Electronic) Oral Arguments using Zoom

In certain cases, the Court may choose to conduct an oral argument remotely using Zoom. Due to the current situation in the state caused by Covid-19, the Court has determined that upcoming oral arguments should be held remotely using Zoom.

Before participating in a remote oral argument, attorneys are advised to watch the training videos below. All remote oral arguments will be scheduled and hosted by the Court of Appeals.

The oral arguments will be livestreamed, and the recording will be available two hours after the oral argument has ended.

Attorneys must contact the Court's Director of Communications by email at ashley.reed@courts.in.gov to schedule a test Zoom meeting to be held at least 48 hours in advance of the scheduled oral argument. This is to assure attorneys' technology is adequate.

Attorneys must check-in with the Court's Director of Communications on Zoom twenty minutes prior to the start time of the scheduled oral argument to, again, assure technology is adequate and functioning properly.

Training videos

- Setting up, downloading, and installing Zoom
- How to join a meeting - Note, you can join using only your computer audio and video. Please test these before joining a meeting.
- Meeting controls - Note, sharing screen content, annotation, and chats are disabled.
- How to use virtual backgrounds – Use of a virtual background in not required.

  At the Zoom test meeting, counsel should be prepared to propose and present for approval a neutral, non-distractive background that is properly lighted.

Tips for a successful electronic oral argument using Zoom

- Attorneys should be dressed in courtroom attire. Solid colors are encouraged.
- Good lighting is key. Avoid having a light source or window behind you in that it creates a "halo" effect. Ideally, you should face a window or place a lamp in front of you.
- Computer camera should be at eye level or slightly higher than eye level.
- Look directly at the camera when talking and not at the participants.
- Eliminate all unnecessary background noise and/or activity. Mute your audio when not participating and unmute only when ready to speak (see Meeting Controls under Training videos above). Also, remember to pause prior to speaking in case there is any audio/video lag.

Download the Zoom desktop or mobile app

Remote Oral Argument Procedures

When you join the Zoom session, you will automatically be placed in the Court's "Oral Argument Waiting Room." You will not be visible to anyone except the Director of Communications at this time. Keep this screen open. You will be admitted into the argument by the Director of Communications as soon as Zoom alerts the Director of Communications as to your presence in the waiting room. After an initial test, the participating attorneys will be placed back in the waiting room and not be admitted until each judge has entered the session and the presiding judge informs the Director of Communications that the panel is ready to begin. Only then will the attorneys be admitted again, and everyone will be instructed individually to turn on their video.

The Director of Communications has the ability to rename, mute, or stop the video of any participant. For uniformity, the Director of Communications will rename the caption of each judge to "Judge First and Last Name" and add "First and Last Name for Appellant or Appellee." Zoom has a limit of approximately 22 characters that appear under a speaker's name, so it is unlikely we can include more content such as the name of the party represented.

Audio & Video

If your internet connection has limited bandwidth or is unreliable, it is recommended that you dial your audio feed in by phone (the phone number is listed on the calendar invitation). If you lose connection to the meeting, your audio feed will remain connected. If you lose your connection to the meeting all together, reconnect by clicking the meeting link in the emailed invitation.
If a participating attorney has poor audio or video, they should be told to either log in from a different device or simply dial in to the conference on their telephone and participate without video.

View Options

All participants should set their Zoom window to Gallery View so that each judge, the arguing attorneys, and the countdown timer will display.

Countdown Timer

The Director of Communications is responsible for running the timer. It will be visible the entire duration of the oral argument.

Oral Argument sequence of events

1. All participants disable their video and mute their microphone.
2. Director of Communications individually asks participants to turn on their video.
3. The webcast begins.
4. Director of Communications announces the oral argument is ready to begin and turns it over to the bailiff.
5. The bailiff calls the court to order.
6. The presiding judge welcomes the participants and invites the appellant's attorney to present his or her argument.

7. The attorney presenting the argument checks that his/her audio is unmuted; all other participants mute their microphone. All participating judges, attorneys, and the timer should be visible on the screen. If that is not the case, confirm that you are in Gallery view and not Speaker view.
8. The attorney presents his/her argument. When finished, he/she mutes their microphone. Each subsequent attorney follows until the last argument has been presented.
9. The presiding judge concludes the oral argument.
10. The bailiff closes the court session at which point the webcast ends.
11. The Director of Communications ends the meeting, which terminates the session for all participants.

Technical Problems

If there is a technical problem with the Zoom session or any participant (e.g., a participant inadvertently drops out or is frozen due to a poor internet connection), the Director of Communications, bailiff, or a judge may announce that there is a problem with the meeting. The presiding judge may instruct everyone on the call that it is being suspended momentarily and the Director of Communications may move participants to the waiting room until the problem is resolved.

If you happen to drop out of the session, you should immediately follow the steps to join the session (i.e., click on the Zoom link). The Director of Communications will be alerted you entered the waiting room and return you to the panel. If you have difficulty rejoining, you may also call the **Director of Communications at 317-752-5463** or the **IT Director at 317-931-9422**.

It is recommended that you observe the strength of your WiFi connection and set any other devices on airplane mode or turn them off during the session. VPN is not recommended to be used during Zoom. You may also try using your cellphone as a WiFi hotspot. It is possible that Zoom may be slow due to high volume of its customer base, due to weak or poor WiFi connections, and storms seem to disrupt WiFi settings.

Disruptive or Unauthorized Participants

Through the use of the private invitation and waiting room features, the Court expects to be able to confirm identities and allow only authorized participants into a session. If, however, someone uses false pretenses to enter a session and "Zoom bombs" the proceeding, the Director of Communications should quickly deactivate the video and audio of that person. If anything is amiss, the judges should immediately instruct the Director of Communications to mute or turn off the video of the participant.