

Tips for Preparing and Participating in a Virtual Court Proceeding in the 18th Judicial Circuit Court of Illinois

In order to facilitate court activities, the judges of the 18th Judicial Circuit Court of Illinois may host court proceedings in a Virtual Courtroom via Zoom or CourtCall. Zoom is a video communications platform for video and audio conferencing.

You currently have two options to join remotely:

1. Go to Zoom.us (Chrome works best)

Select "Join Meeting" in the upper-right-hand corner

Enter Meeting ID, which is a series of numbers, and provided by the court

2. If you cannot log on through a computer or smart phone, you can dial any of the numbers below the meeting ID and passcode from a phone. Then enter Meeting ID, followed by # when prompted.

Be Prepared

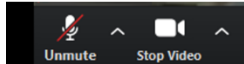
- Parties must have enough battery for the entire court session and have a charger readily available.
- Have enough data and/or Wi-Fi.
- Keep the phone dial-in information close by in case you experience unforeseen technical difficulties.
- You should dress as you would if you were appearing before the Judge in person.
- Be in a quiet area with minimal background noise.
- Check the lighting. Light from a window behind you might blind the camera, making you look dark. Light above you in the center of a room might also cast shadows. Ideally, position a lamp, or sit facing a window, where light is directly on your face.
- You should practice Zoom Meeting functions, and familiarize yourself with your internet, video, and audio capabilities prior to the hearing.
- You can test your equipment here: <https://zoom.us/test>

What to Expect

When you join a Virtual Courtroom, you will wait for your case to be called in a virtual waiting room. There may be several cases set on the docket at that time. When your case is called, the court will bring you into the Virtual Courtroom.

Because the Zoom app works on all modern smart phones, tablets and computers, each attorney is expected to appear by video, rather than merely by voice.

When you enter the Virtual Courtroom, your video will automatically be on and your audio muted. Please remain muted unless you are speaking and unmute your microphone before you speak. On a computer you will see a microphone on the bottom left of the screen. It will have a red line through it when you are muted. Below, the microphone is muted.



Remember to speak one at a time, and to pause prior to speaking in case there is any audio/video lag. Be sure to announce yourself before you begin speaking.

Screen Name

Your screen name should reflect your title and legal name. Include your office if it will help identify you. You may customize your name several ways.

1. From the Virtual Courtroom, click on the “Participants” icon at the bottom of the window. A Participants window will appear. Hover the mouse over your name until you see “More.” Click “More.” Click the “Rename” button. Enter your new name in the “New Screen Name.” After clicking the blue “OK” button, your new name will appear.
2. On a smartphone, launch the Zoom app and select “Participants” at the bottom of the screen. Tap on your current name to open the editing menu, then choose Rename. Enter your new name in the “New Screen Name.” After clicking the blue “OK” button, your new name will appear.
3. If you have a Zoom account, you can customize your user profile, including your Screen Name preferences.

Witnesses

You are responsible for ensuring your witness(es) have the information necessary to appear.

Witnesses should plan to appear on video. Witnesses will be called as any case, and the court will bring them in one at a time from the waiting room.

Witnesses are only permitted in the Virtual Courtroom while they are testifying. Those testifying are not to hold notes or paperwork while testifying, just as though s/he were on the witness stand.

Witnesses may be asked to answer questions posed by the Court, the Plaintiff/Petitioner, and/or the Defendant/Respondent.

Once a witness is done testifying, the witness will leave the Virtual Courtroom and should not talk to anyone about his or her testimony until after the conclusion of the hearing.