

Remote Appearance Guide

In accordance with Local Rule 9074-1, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Middle District of Pennsylvania is permitting participants to appear by videoconference.¹ Participants should review this guide and other available resources to familiarize themselves with the video hearing process. This guide summarizes the basics of how a participant may use Zoom to participate in a court hearing remotely.

Important: All persons are strictly prohibited from making any recording of court proceedings, whether by video, audio, "screenshot," or otherwise. Violation of this prohibition may result in the imposition of monetary and non-monetary sanctions. The Clerk of the Court maintains an audio recording of all proceedings, which recording constitutes the official record of those proceedings.

[Notice and Registration of Remote Appearance](#)

All persons who intend to appear at a Court hearing remotely must register to do so. Registration must be completed by 5:00 p.m. on the day before the hearing. Note this is not to be used to appear remotely to a 341 meeting of creditors.

[Remote Hearing Registration \(Judge Van Eck\)](#)

[Remote Hearing Registration \(Judge Conway\)](#)

Once you have registered, you will receive an e-mail with the Meeting ID and Password. The Meeting IDs and Passwords are subject to change and, therefore, it is essential to register for each hearing date to ensure you have the proper information to appear remotely.

To view a list of people appearing remotely for hearings: [Judge Van Eck](#) [Judge Conway](#)

[What You Need to Participate in a Video Hearing](#)

There is no fee for participating in a video hearing. Upon registering to appear remotely, you will receive an email with connection information. As explained below, you may use this information to connect to the video hearing through an internet browser and/or through the Zoom app.

Participation does not require a Zoom account. However, it is recommended that you obtain a Zoom account (a free account will suffice) due to improved functionality and features.

¹ Participants seeking to present testimony remotely must comply with L.R. 9074-1(b). **Evidentiary matters may be conducted remotely only with the prior approval of the court.**

Participation requires a device that supports Zoom. Supported devices include computers, tablets, and smart phones. Your device must have a camera, microphone and speaker. You are encouraged to download the Zoom app, test your equipment, and test your connection to Zoom at least one day before the hearing. You may do so by following the same directions for "How to Join a Zoom Video Hearing." You may use the microphone and speaker integrated in your device but are encouraged to use a separate headset (with microphone) to reduce feedback and improve audio quality. If you are using a computer to connect, you also may use your telephone (and its headset) to access the audio portion of the hearing.

How to Join a Video Hearing

1. You should join your video hearing at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled hearing time to ensure your equipment and connection are operational.
2. There is more than one method to join your Zoom video hearing.
 - a. The recommended method is to click on the hyperlink for the hearing, however, you can also manually enter the URL. This will launch the Zoom app (or browser plugin) automatically enter the Meeting ID, and prompt you for the Password.

If this is your first-time using Zoom on this device, you will be prompted to download the Zoom app or browser plugin. Follow the instructions and then enter the Meeting ID and Password, as prompted.

- b. Alternatively, you may join your video hearing by opening the Zoom app directly on your device, or by visiting join.zoomgov.com. In either case, you must (i) click the button labeled "Join" or "Join A Meeting," (ii) enter the Meeting ID, and (iii) enter the Password.
3. After entering the Meeting ID and/or Password, you may be given the option to "Test Computer Audio." If this option appears, click on the "Test Computer Audio" button to test your audio. Upon confirmation that your audio is working properly, click the button labeled "Join audio by computer" to complete your connection to the hearing.
4. The Court expects all remote participants to **appear by video**. Participants may use the audio-only dial in number **only in the event of technical malfunction that prevents a video connection**.
5. When connected please mute your microphone and stop your video. **Remain on mute without video until you need to speak and then mute/stop video again when you have finished.**

If you were permitted to connect by telephone, you can mute and unmute by pressing *6.

Court's Technical Failures/Backup System - If the Court's Zoom system is not working, it will use the backup videoconferencing system as outlined in the email you receive when you register. NOTE: The backup connection will be operational only when the Court's Zoom system is not functioning.

Available Controls for Participants in Video Hearings

Participants using the Zoom app on a computer will notice a menu bar at the bottom of the screen, as shown below. Participants using the app on a tablet or smart phone will have similar controls, although they may appear differently.



Join Audio – This selection allows you to select your audio connection. Once an audio connection is established, this icon will change to that of a microphone. Pressing this selection will permit you to mute or unmute your audio feed. Clicking the up arrow next to the headset (or microphone) icon will allow you to open and adjust your audio settings.

Start Video – This selection will allow you to start or stop your video feed (i.e., your camera). Clicking the up arrow next to the camera icon will allow you to open and adjust your video settings.

Participants – This selection displays the number of participants. Clicking the up arrow next to the people icon will open a list of participants in the hearing.

Breakout Rooms– Can be used 30 minutes before and during hearings to have a private conversation with another party. Please see the [attached document](#) for details.

Share Screen – If the judge permits the use of this feature, clicking this icon will allow you to share your desktop or application window with all others participating in the hearing. This function may be disabled. *Even if it is enabled, you should never use this feature without prior permission of the judge.*

Leave – Selecting this button will cause you to leave the hearing.

View – Depending on your Zoom screen, there will be an option to toggle between "Speaker" and "Gallery" views in the upper right-hand corner. The "Speaker" view displays only the active speaker. The "Gallery" view simultaneously displays the tiles of all meeting participant.



Tips For A Successful Video Hearing Experience

1. You should test the video and audio capabilities of a computer or mobile device in advance of the hearing (i.e., at least one day in advance).
2. If you intend to speak at the hearing, please ensure you are situated in a quiet place.
3. If you are connecting to a hearing using a wireless device, please confirm in advance that there is a strong wireless signal.
4. **Mute your audio until it is your turn to speak.** When you have finished speaking, return to mute status.
 - a. If connected to the audio feed by telephone, you may mute or unmute your connection by pressing *6 on the phone.
 - b. If connected to the audio feed through your device, you may mute or unmute your connection through the app.
5. You should say your name when first speaking and each time you speak after someone else has spoken. This may seem awkward but is essential to making a good court record. The only part of the hearing being recorded is the audio. If a transcript is requested, it is sometimes difficult for the transcriber to know who is speaking.
6. When participating in a video hearing, try to avoid having a window or bright background behind you. (This may cause you to appear as a shadow.) If you cannot avoid a bright background, try using a desk lamp or other light source to brighten your face. Do not use digital/virtual backgrounds.
7. Video hearings are official court proceedings and must be treated as if it were in open court. All persons appearing by video must:
 - ensure appropriate and professional dress/attire;
 - appear only from a private location free from distractions;
 - not connect from public spaces or automobiles;
 - ensure they appear visibly and clearly with appropriate lighting;
 - ensure there are no extraneous background sounds or noises that could interfere with the proceeding or impede the participants' ability to hear the proceeding or the official recording;
 - only connect from a static location (do not be moving around).
8. You are permitted in the Zoom app to specify a display name. Please provide your complete name to assist the Court in creating an accurate record of the proceedings.

Court's Technical Failures/Backup System - If the Court's Zoom system is not working, it will use the backup videoconferencing system as outlined in the email you receive when you register. NOTE: The backup connection will be operational only when the Court's Zoom system is not functioning.

[Zoom Help Center](#)

For more information and instructional videos see the Zoom Help Center at the link below:
<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>