

United States Bankruptcy Court for the Western District of Texas



Virtual Courtroom Guidelines for Users

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User Instructions for Zoom Hearings

What you'll need:

- A desktop computer, laptop, or tablet (“**device**”).
- A camera (i.e., a webcam integrated into your device, or a discrete camera connected to the device).
- A high-speed internet connection.
- A phone (either mobile or landline).

For the best audio quality, the Court recommends that counsel use a USB microphone instead of the integrated microphone in their device.

Connecting to Zoom for the first time:

1. Download and install the Zoom application on your device.
2. If you do not have a Zoom account, select the option to join as a guest.
3. Enter your screen name and email address.
4. Select continue.

Step-by-step instructions for joining a hearing using Zoom:

1. Launch the Zoom Meeting app on your computer device.
2. Enter the Meeting ID (160-5269-3674) or the Personal Link Name (parkercourt1) in the 'Join Meeting' box.
3. Click on 'Join.'
4. You'll be connected to the 'Courtroom Host's Personal Meeting Room' screen. You will be automatically placed into a waiting room. No need to worry – the host knows you're here and will let you into the hearing once your case is called.
5. Once admitted by the host, choose 'Join Audio with WiFi' or 'Connect with Computer Audio,' depending on your device.
6. That's it! You're now ready to address the court. For better sound quality, consider using earbuds or headphones instead of speakerphones.

Ground Rules for Zoom Hearings

Although Zoom connects you to the courtroom by video, the audio coming through your device remains extremely important. Hearings are electronically recorded by the Court, so it is critical that your audio is clear throughout the hearing.

Rule #1: Recording or broadcasting the hearing is strictly prohibited – just as you would not be allowed to record or broadcast if you were in the courtroom.

Rule #2: State your name before you speak.

Rule #3: Please try to avoid addressing the Court while using speakerphone. Instead, please use the following alternatives:

- Corded or wireless earbuds that have a built-in microphone;
- A headset with a microphone; or
- Your phone’s handset.

You may use the speakerphone if you are only listening to the hearing.

Rule #4: Please mute your speaker while you are only listening to the hearing. You may mute your device using Zoom (by toggling the microphone icon at the bottom of your screen) or, if calling in via smartphone, by tapping the “mute” button on your call interface.

Rule #5: Speak *slowly* and *clearly*. This will minimize the number of times the Court or other parties may ask you to repeat yourself and allow the ERO to make a clear record.

Rule #6: Do not interrupt when someone else is speaking. The Court will provide everyone who wants to be heard with an opportunity to speak. Feel free to silently raise your hand if you want to speak, so the Court has a cue to call on you.

Rule #7: When your hearing is over, you do not need to ask permission to be excused. You may simply disconnect from the call or hang up your phone.

Tips for Zoom Hearings

Tip #1: Be punctual and prepared.

Please log into Zoom at least 15 minutes before the start of your hearing. If it is your first time using Zoom, please log in at least 30 minutes before the start of your hearing to check your connection, your video, and your audio. If the host (Courtroom Deputy) has not yet started the Zoom meeting when you log in, please stay connected until the host arrives and starts the meeting. Please make sure your audio is muted when you log into the meeting so you do not interrupt any other hearings that may be in progress.

Tip #2: Use the Zoom Meetings software application.

Download and log into Zoom hearings through the application, not through your web browser.

Tip #3: Be ready if you have exhibits.

For Zoom hearings, marked and bound hard copies of exhibits should be provided to the Court, with copies to opposing counsel by hard copy or email, as required by the Local Bankruptcy Rules. Exhibits may be sent to the Court by email or filed with exhibit lists if specifically permitted by the Judge or Courtroom Deputy in your case. Make sure all testifying witnesses are provided with a copy of exhibits.

It is not necessary to display exhibits on the Zoom computer screen during a hearing, as the Court and all parties should already have received the exhibits. You can admit and refer to exhibits as you would in a normal hearing. If you want to point out a particular exhibit or document to the Court at a hearing by putting it on the computer screen, Zoom has a “share” button at the bottom of the screen.

If you want to use electronic exhibits for a Zoom hearing, contact the Courtroom Deputy well in advance of your hearing to determine if it is feasible.

Tip #4: Instruct your clients and witnesses on logistics and procedure for Zoom.

Counsel should instruct their clients and witnesses on how to connect to and use Zoom from their own devices *in advance of the hearing*.

Tip #5: Dress appropriately.

Parties appearing via Zoom are expected to dress as they would for a live hearing, in courtroom-appropriate attire.

Calling into the Hearing with a Telephone

In the rare event that the Court grants you a telephonic appearance, the same ground rules apply to you. If granted permission, you may join the call using the following numbers:

Dial by your location

- +1 669 254 5252 US (San Jose)
- +1 415 449 4000 US (US Spanish Line)
- +1 669 216 1590 US (San Jose)
- +1 646 964 1167 US (US Spanish Line)
- +1 551 285 1373 US (New Jersey)
- +1 646 828 7666 US (New York)
- 833 435 1820 US Toll-free
- 833 568 8864 US Toll-free

Help/Test Session

Further information about Judge Parker's procedure and practices for Zoom hearings is available on the Court's website at <https://www.txwb.uscourts.gov/honorable-michael-m-parker-us-bankruptcy-judge>.

If you want to set up a test session using Zoom, contact the Judge's Courtroom Deputy or law clerk to schedule a test session in advance of your hearing.