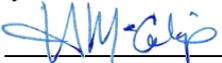


October 6 2020

David J. Bradley, Clerk of Court

By Deputy Clerk 

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
LAREDO DIVISION**

**IN RE: REMOTE COURT
PROCEEDINGS IN THE
LAREDO DIVISION**

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SPECIAL ORDER L-2020-14

ORDER

This Order applies in the Laredo Division of the Southern District of Texas. The COVID-19 national emergency and the severity of the risk to the public health have led the federal courts, with added authority granted by Congress and the Judicial Conference of the United States, to enter orders that reduce the need for in-person court appearances when the law permits it and the circumstances justify it. Accordingly, there has been a corresponding increase in Court proceedings being conducted remotely by video conference or telephonically. This Order addresses procedures and decorum for remote participation in court proceedings.

1. Each Court will independently consider the circumstances and issues pertinent to each case and will decide whether the proceeding will take place via Zoom video conference, by telephone, or in person. *See* Special Order L-2020-13.

2. Persons granted remote access to proceedings are reminded of the general prohibition against photographing, recording, or rebroadcasting of federal court proceedings (including those held by telephone or videoconference). Recording of a federal court proceeding held by video or teleconference is strictly prohibited. Violation of these rules may result in the denial of entry to future hearings or any other sanction deemed necessary by the Court.

3. Other than invited participants, no additional parties will be admitted to the call without prior approval by the Court. Do not forward the Zoom invite to non-participating colleagues/persons or post on public forums.

4. Any member of the public wishing access to the proceeding may obtain that access by contacting the case manager for the specific court in which the matter is pending. Instructions for how to participate will be provided by email. Any questions as to how one may participate may be directed to the Clerk of Court for the Southern District of Texas, Laredo Division, at (956) 723-3542.

5. Anyone intending to participate in a court proceeding by video conference should connect to the video conference at least fifteen minutes before start time to allow sufficient time to address any technical problems that may arise with participation.

6. The Court requires all persons who appear for a court proceeding by video conference or telephonically to behave and conduct themselves as if they were appearing in-person in the courtroom. Anyone appearing in a court proceeding by Zoom video conference, or telephonically to the extent applicable, shall comply with the following rules:

- Follow appropriate courtroom etiquette.
- Dress with dignity. Attorneys should wear business attire, and non-attorneys should wear business or business-casual attire.
- Do not eat or drink during the court proceeding.
- Appear at an appropriate non-public location where the participant can focus without distraction. Public, noisy, and echoing locations are not appropriate, such as a vehicle or public restaurant. Even at your home, conducting a video conference from your bed or other informal surroundings is not appropriate.
- Mute your phone and all sounds from all other applications, including email notifications and chat messaging.

- Avoid using devices such as laptops, tablets, or smartphones while only using battery power. Plug into a good power source while in a Zoom video conference.
- Unless you have confirmed the quality is adequate, avoid using an open microphone and speakers, such as a webcam mic or those built into laptops. Using a good quality headset (headphones with mic) will often help ensure you can be heard and can hear others with maximum quality.
- Avoid poor camera positioning (if possible).
- Ensure that lighting is adequate. Avoid backlit light sources.
- Make sure your background is clear of clutter and identifying information such as personal photos. If you use a virtual background, it should be appropriate for a professional setting such as a court proceeding.

7. Counsel are responsible for making their clients aware of the contents of this order and for preparing their clients to appear for a court proceeding by video conference, including confirming that the client has adequate technology available to appear by video conference.

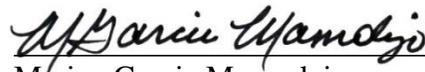
8. Counsel are responsible for sharing of exhibits during a hearing. If you anticipate displaying exhibit(s) during a hearing, Zoom support has a comprehensive guide on screen sharing posted on their web site.

9. Participants in a Zoom video conference with the Court (attorney, witness, case party, etc.) must prepare properly to ensure that all involved will have a good experience using this system. For security and enforcement of court standards, the Court may disable Zoom interactions such as chat, screen share, whiteboard, or any other feature that is unnecessary to conduct the hearing.

Signed this 6th day of October, 2020.



Diana Saldaña
United States District Judge



Marina Garcia Marmolejo
United States District Judge



Diana Song Quiroga
United States Magistrate Judge



John A. Kazen
United States Magistrate Judge



Christopher dos Santos
United States Magistrate Judge