

Virtual court proceedings should be conducted in a manner that promotes the integrity of the judicial system. Courtroom decorum rules still apply. Those participating in virtual hearings and status conferences should continue to operate as if they were inside the courtroom (except that the Court will permit counsel to remain seated when addressing the Court).

In addition, beginning January 1, 2026, proceedings will no longer be conducted by Zoom.

Accordingly, the following policy has been updated:

**JUDGE SOMERS' TOPEKA REGULAR DOCKETS, PRETRIALS, STATUS
CONFERENCES, AND EVIDENTIARY HEARINGS
(Updated January 28, 2026)**

I. Regular Dockets and Pretrial/Status Conferences

A. Video Proceedings

1. Except when the Court directs otherwise, counsel and other parties attending regularly scheduled dockets, including pretrial/status conference dockets, may participate remotely. Counsel and parties are also welcome and encouraged to attend these matters in person.
2. Parties appearing remotely must participate by Cisco Webex video. **THERE IS NO COST TO YOU FOR THIS SERVICE.** Joining by computer is the Court's preference because it usually provides a better audio experience.
3. The Court may require a party to appear in person if the party repeatedly appears via telephone (absent extenuating circumstances) or if the audio quality is repeatedly exceptionally poor.
4. The instructions for appearing by computer are:

Cisco Webex Meeting link:

<https://us-courts.webex.com/us-courts/j.php?MTID=m7a5636c1a0875e4414a01f24ec970db5>

If prompted for meeting number, enter 2307 168 9263

5. All **non-parties** who wish to hear or observe the video proceedings must send an email to the Clerk's Office no later than three business days prior to the scheduled hearing date--Topeka_CRDs@ksb.uscourts.gov. If you are connecting by telephone, you must provide the Court with the telephone number that will be used to connect, the first and last name of the person who will connect, and such person's interest in the proceeding. You must always keep your telephone muted unless addressed by the Court.

6. Protocol

- All participants must have their video feature turned on when addressing the Court. Any participant not in compliance must provide an explanation to the Court as to why he/she is unable to comply.
- Participants must start the session with their first and last name displayed on the video screen. **This can only be accomplished if participant is using Webex (vs. using a telephone).**
- Participants should use only one device to log into Webex. However, if two devices are necessary to log in, the audio feature on one device must be muted to avoid echoing.
- Participants should connect to Webex at least 10 minutes prior to the scheduled proceeding.

B. Telephone Proceedings

1. The instructions for appearing by telephone are:

Dial In Number: 1-855-244-8681

Participant Access Code: 2307 168 9263 #

If prompted for attendee number, press #

2. Protocol

- Call in 10 minutes prior to your hearing time.
- Use a land line, when possible, so the Court can hear you more clearly and for the benefit of the ECRO (official recording of the proceeding).
- When you call in, place your phone on MUTE. Only unmute your phone when your case is called.
- **Do not put your phone on speaker when talking** because it is often difficult for the Court to hear you clearly.
- Do not place your phone on HOLD. This often causes music to be played, which will interfere with others on the call and the ECRO recording.
- Announce your name EACH time you begin speaking (for a clear electronic record).
- Speak slowly and clearly.

II. Evidentiary Hearings and Oral Argument

A. Appearances

1. Counsel and parties should appear **in person** for matters that are scheduled for an **evidentiary hearing or oral argument**, unless prior approval to appear remotely has been given by the Court.
2. The Court may grant permission for a witness to appear remotely. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should be made in writing at least 7 days prior to trial. Remote witnesses should appear by video; however, telephone appearance may be allowed in certain circumstances.

B. Remote Witness Testimony and Exhibits

1. The party offering the remote witness must ensure that all necessary exhibits are supplied to the witness in hard copy prior to the evidentiary proceeding, in sufficient time for the witness to become familiar with them. Exhibits must be in paper form, tabbed, paginated, and in notebooks. For more specific instructions regarding submission of exhibits, please refer to the Trial Notice or Trial Reminder Letter issued by the Court.
2. Remote witnesses should connect to Webex at least 15 minutes prior to the trial start time, unless the Court directs otherwise.
3. If testifying by telephone, the witness should mute the phone when not addressing the Court to prevent background noise and **avoid using speaker phone**.
4. Any remote witness will be sworn in, and the testimony will have the same effect as if the witness was sworn in at the courthouse.

For questions regarding any of these procedures, please contact the Clerk's office-- (785) 338-5910 or Topeka_CRDs@ksb.uscourts.gov.