



Supreme Court of Florida

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Craig Waters
Florida Supreme Court
(850) 414-7641
watersc@flcourts.org

Expanded Public Access to Florida’s Courts via the Virtual Courtroom Directory

TALLAHASSEE -- The Florida Supreme Court has launched its Virtual Courtroom Directory (courtrooms.flcourts.org) to expand public access to court proceedings. The Virtual Courtroom Directory offers a simple way to find virtual hearings and court livestreams of trials and oral arguments throughout the state.

“Florida’s courts continue to meet the ongoing challenges of the pandemic,” said Chief Justice Charles Canady. “The Virtual Courtroom Directory offers safe access to proceedings statewide. People have a front-row seat into our courts from wherever they are, and they can see that justice continues even in challenging circumstances.”

Users can search courts and sort by judge or hearing officer and proceeding type. Actively streaming courts display as “Live Now” at the top of the list. Clicking “Watch” takes users to each court’s streaming service. Proceeding types vary by court, but can include first appearances, arraignments, criminal pre-trial hearings, violation of probation, criminal and civil trials, and oral arguments.

Four judicial circuits (including Bay, Broward, Leon, and Miami-Dade counties), all five of the state’s district courts, and the supreme court are accessible via the directory. Other courts will be added as the directory expands.

Many courts use the Zoom to YouTube feature for live streaming. Recent advancements in automated live captioning, now available through both platforms, provide greater access to persons with disabilities. The Virtual Court Directory will provide closed captioning for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, within the technology currently available for livestreaming. Reasonable accommodations are available to ensure effective communication when required by law.

The move toward more virtual proceedings is a major historical shift in state court operations, which have relied heavily on in-person hearings in the 175 years Florida has been a state. When the pandemic began, Chief Justice Canady issued administrative orders expanding the authority of judicial officers to conduct proceedings remotely and from locations other than traditional courtrooms.

More than 1,700 Zoom licenses for judges, court officers, and staff have been installed. Between March and December 2020, more than 400,000 Zoom hearings and other events were held by judges and court personnel, involving 2.6 million participants. Largely through remote proceedings, trial courts in Florida are on track to dispose of a projected 2.8 million cases in fiscal year 2020–2021.

Florida's courts are committed to openness and transparency and have long been pioneers in increasing public access to court information. In the mid-1970s, Florida was the first state to let cameras into its courtrooms after a decades-long ban that started in the 1930s.

Florida's courts likewise were early to develop a presence on the World-Wide Web, with the Florida Supreme Court launching an official website starting in 1994. The Florida Supreme Court also began livestreaming all of its arguments, gavel to gavel, starting in 1997.

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