

NEWS RELEASE

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May 12, 2020

WYOMING SUPREME COURT CONDUCTS FIRST REMOTE ORAL ARGUMENTS ON MAY 12

The Wyoming State Supreme Court conducted its first fully remote oral arguments in three cases heard May 12 via video in the Microsoft Teams platform. “We are pleased with the success of our first day of video arguments,” said Chief Justice Michael Davis. “While we look forward to returning to in-person hearings when it is safe to do so, we are fully committed to observing social distancing to maintain the safety of our court personnel, parties, and counsel,” Davis added. “The Wyoming Supreme Court has been able to continue its work despite the closure, thanks to our excellent IT staff and the ability to work remotely.”

Wyoming courts have had advanced technology that allowed them to conduct proceedings and hearings remotely for some time, but the use of that technology has significantly expanded in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Where possible, rules have been relaxed to allow courts to minimize exposure of employees, attorneys, and the public to the virus through use of technology and other means. For instance, court clerks will accept email filings in most cases, and the Supreme Court has lifted its rule requiring paper copies of briefs. Public access to the Wyoming Supreme Court’s oral arguments continues to be available by live-streaming at <https://www.courts.state.wy.us/supreme-court/live-broadcast/>.

The Court is now working with the State’s District and Circuit courts to formulate plans for gradual reopening of the courts, including phased-in public proceedings and resumption of jury trials. “Our objective is to maintain the safety of court personnel and the public, while achieving timely judicial work to the extent possible,” Davis said. “Trial by jury is a right guaranteed by the constitutions of the United States and the State of Wyoming. We are anxious to resume them as soon as we can do so while protecting the health of jurors and court staff.” The judicial branch’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic — including Supreme Court orders regarding adjustment in operations and links to information and resources — can be found on a dedicated web page at <https://www.courts.state.wy.us/coronavirus-covid-19-updates/>.