



Chambers of  
**James C. Babler**  
**Barron County**  
**Circuit Judge, Branch 1**



Barron County Justice Center  
1420 State Hwy 25 North Room 2601  
Barron, WI 54812-3006  
TEL: (715) 537-6260  
FAX: (715) 537-6269

Laura Fornell Court Reporter  
Bobbette Reinke Judicial Assistant  
Deanne Alsbury Register in Probate  
Shanda Harrington Justice Programs Coordinator

March 1, 2021

Wisconsin Supreme Court

**RE: Rule Petition: 20-09 Video Conferencing Technology**

Dear Chief Justice Roggensack & Justices:

I write to whole-heartedly support the Director's Rule Petition 20-09 on Video Conferencing Technology. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront the need to change the rules on video conferencing.

Prior to the pandemic, small rural counties had many difficulties finding legal representation for criminal defendants due to, among other things, the lack of attorneys in the area and the distance of travel for other attorneys to take cases. Conducting most of the hearings (excluding Jury Trials) by video conference has allowed many attorneys to take cases which they would not have otherwise accepted. This has greatly reduced the need to adjourn criminal cases until an attorney can be found who can take the case in our county.

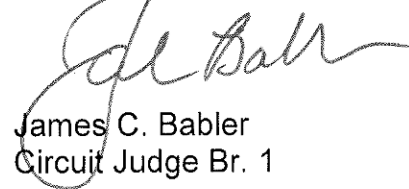
The phrase "Justice delayed is Justice denied" is not merely a hollow statement. Video conferencing allows attorneys to promptly take and schedule preliminary examinations and arraignments according to their schedule rather than making a two-hour round trip for a five-minute hearing. You can imagine that many of the lawyers in Northwestern Wisconsin greatly appreciate the efficiencies provided by video conferencing.

Our county is blessed with high-quality (and expensive) video conferencing equipment which provides excellent audio and video quality. When asked if they wish to appear by video conference or in person, at least 95 percent of the defendants appearing before me choose video conferencing for their own convenience and time. The ability to allow these criminal defendants to meet with their attorneys privately during Zoom hearings through a breakout room gives added confidence to fairness and due process. Furthermore, being near the Minnesota border we often have out-of-state defendants who are appreciative of the option of appearing remotely. The few people who have declined to use video conferencing have indicated that it's because of their own technology issues rather than an unwillingness to use the Court's video conferencing capabilities.

Chief Justice Roggensack & Justices  
March 1, 2021  
Page 2

Finally, most young people and many others not only desire but expect the ability to appear remotely for Court. I believe it is time for the Court system to fully enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. I respectfully request the Court to adopt the Petition.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James C. Babler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

James C. Babler  
Circuit Judge Br. 1

JCB/bjr

cc Honorable Randy Koschnick