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From: Chris Placitella <cplacitella@cprlaw.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 15, 2020 12:06 PM
To: Comments Mailbox
Cc: Chris Placitella
Subject: [External]Virtual Jury Trials

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Dear Judge Grant

I write in reference to the Court's request for comments concerning virtual jury trials. First and foremost, thank you for Your efforts to keep the lawyers, litigants and the judiciary safe in these trying times. Your concern is greatly appreciated by all. I currently serve on the State Bar, NJAJ and TANJ committees responsible for addressing the need for and the execution of virtual jury trials. I have also recently had the privilege of participating on a panel at the New Jersey Judicial College concerning virtual trials.

In an effort to address the issues raised by the Court, at this point I have corresponded or spoken with hundreds of lawyers throughout New Jersey concerning the need for virtual jury trials. I have also spoken with numerous lawyers who have actually participated in virtual jury trials involving complex cases in multiple states. Based upon my extensive research, it is my considered opinion that participation in virtual trials must be mandatory absent a showing of good cause. Otherwise the program will not work, placing at risk, not only the public's access to justice, but the financial well being of many small to medium size law firms.

I would also urge the Court not to limit virtual trials to simple cases. While it may make sense to have the first one or two trials in each vicinage focus on cases that can be tried in a few days, virtual trials should be required and made available to all litigants. Experience has proven across the country that the virtual trial format works in complex cases and the threat of such trials has been instrumental in moving all kinds of cases to resolution.

In pursuit of the best possible solutions to address the current circumstances, I have consulted experts on available trial technology concerning the optimal way to present and view evidence in the virtual setting. This includes not only people with technical expertise, but highly respected jury consultants who have been involved in thousands of virtual depositions and numerous virtual trials. The information I rely upon also includes focus groups conducted in three separate New Jersey vicinages concerning juror attitudes and concerns relating to participation in virtual vs. in person proceedings. I am available if needed

to further share the details of my research and provide any assistance that you believe would be helpful to the Court.

Thank you for Your continuing willingness to allow members of the Bar to participate in finding solutions to keeping access to justice open for all.

Respectfully
Chris Placitella

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