

**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT
DISTRICT OF CONNECTICUT**

**PROCEDURES AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR TELEPHONIC APPEARANCES IN
SCHEDULED HEARINGS BEFORE THIS COURT**

PROCEDURES FOR TELEPHONIC APPEARANCES

Since March 2020, the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Connecticut (the “Court”) has issued several General Orders Regarding Court Operations Under the Exigent Circumstances Created by COVID-19 (see General Orders on www.ctb.uscourts.gov) (the “General Orders”). The General Orders provide that all matters scheduled for hearings and conferences during the COVID-19 pandemic will be conducted telephonically. The Court provides these procedures and instructions for telephonic appearances at scheduled hearings before the Court.

If a party who is appearing telephonically at a scheduled hearing or conference fails to respond to the call of the matter on the Court calendar, the Court may pass the matter or may treat the failure to respond as a failure to appear. A hearing or conference generally will not be rescheduled due to the failure to appear. A party who fails to appear as scheduled may face sanctions from the Court. Sanctions may include denying the matter for failure to prosecute, proceeding in the absence of a party who fails to appear, or a monetary sanction.

Telephonic appearances are connected directly to the courtroom's audio system and electronic recording equipment and create an official record of the scheduled hearing or conference. All parties participating in the scheduled hearing or conference should be able to hear all parties without difficulty or echo. To ensure the quality of the official record of the scheduled hearing or conference, telephonic participants are strongly encouraged to use a “land line” telephone. The use of a cell phone during a telephonic appearance is discouraged due greater potential for disruptive surroundings or poor connection. Any party using a cell phone during a telephonic appearance may be disconnected from the scheduled hearing or conference at the discretion of the Court. The use of speakerphones, public telephone booths, phones while driving, or phones used in public places is discouraged and such use may also result in the party being disconnected from the scheduled hearing or conference at the discretion of the Court.

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I. INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE USE OF A COURT APPROVED TELEPHONIC HEARING OR CONFERENCE VENDOR

Unless the Court allows a party to appear telephonically by a means other than a Court approved telephonic hearing or conference vendor, a party will receive instructions as to which court approved vendor to use for the scheduled hearing or conference. The Court approved telephonic hearing vendors are AT&T/Webex, ZoomGov, CourtCall, and CourtSolutions. The instructions on using and for registering, if necessary, for a telephonic hearing or conference are set forth below.

A. Instruction for telephonic hearings using AT&T/Webex Conference line.

1. For telephonic hearings using AT&T/Webex, there is no need to register for an account and there is no cost to the participants.
2. The Court will provide participants a toll-free phone number and Access Code/Pin. This information will be provided either directly through email, or through an ECF event or Notice of Hearing.
3. With that information, a participant will dial into a scheduled hearing using a phone.

Upon connecting to the hearing, please **mute** your phone directly on your phone or by hitting *6 on your phone's keypad. Keep your line muted until your case is called or you are otherwise addressed by the Court. *6 will mute and unmute your AT&T connection.

B. Instruction for telephonic hearings using ZoomGov.

1. For telephonic hearings using ZoomGov, there is no need to register for an account and there is no cost to the participants.
2. The Court will provide participants a Meeting ID and Numeric Password/Pin through a Notice of Hearing.
3. With that information, a participant will dial the number closest to their location (for better quality connection):
 - a. East Coast – (646) 828-7666
 - b. West Coast – (669) 254-5252
4. After dialing, ZoomGov will instruct the caller to enter the information provided by the Court.
 - a. Meeting ID: When prompted, enter the Meeting ID, then #.
 - b. Participant ID: When prompted, enter your Participant ID, then #, (or to bypass it, simply enter #).
 - c. Meeting Password: When prompted, enter the Meeting Password, then #.

Upon connecting to the hearing, please **mute** your phone directly on your phone or by hitting *6 on your phone's keypad. Keep your line muted until your case is called or you are otherwise addressed by the Court. *6 will mute and unmute your ZoomGov connection.

For additional instruction and guidance on using ZoomGov, please refer to the "Procedures and Guide for Remote Appearances using ZoomGov" document on the court's website.

C. Instruction for telephonic hearings using CourtCall.

1. If necessary, create an account with CourtCall (creating an account is only necessary if the party does not already have an account).

Call CourtCall at (866) 582-6878 to create an account.

2. Registering for a hearing with CourtCall.

Call CourtCall at (866) 582-6878 to register for the hearing, not later than 12:00 noon on the business day prior to the hearing date.

CourtCall will provide the participant with written confirmation of a telephonic appearance and provide a number to call for the telephonic appearance.

3. Charges¹.

The initial charge per participant for a CourtCall appearance is \$35 for the first 45 minutes of the call. For each additional 15-minute increment, the charge is \$7.50 per increment. Note that CourtCall charges a registered party for a call even if they fail to appear for the registered telephonic appearance.

Any issues with billing shall be directed to the vendor. The Court is not responsible for the billing or collection of the fees incurred with CourtCall.

4. Order of Proceeding.

CourtCall does not place a call to counsel on the day of the hearing. It is counsel's responsibility to dial into the call not later than 10 minutes prior to the scheduled hearing.

Upon connecting to the call and at the time of the hearing, a party may initially be in the Listen Only mode in which case he/she will be able to hear the case currently on call, just as if a party were in the courtroom. Once the judge or courtroom deputy calls the appropriate case, the caller will be placed in active mode and will hear requests for appearances. Then, the Court will further direct the order of the proceeding. Each time a telephonic party speaks, he/she should identify them self for the record. The court's teleconferencing system allows more than one speaker to be heard, so the judge can interrupt a speaker to ask a question or redirect the discussion. When the judge informs the participants that the hearing is completed, the telephonic participant may disconnect, and the next case will be called.

5. Failure to appear.

If a party does not timely call and connect to a hearing with the Court Call operator, they will be billed by CourtCall for the call and the hearing may proceed in their absence. The party that failed to appear may also face sanctions from the court.

¹ As of February 2020

6. Other/Miscellaneous.

Telephonic appearances by multiple participants are only possible when there is compliance with every procedural requirement. Sanctions may be imposed when there is any deviation from the required procedures or the Court determines that a person's conduct makes telephonic appearances inappropriate. Sanctions may include denying the matter for failure to prosecute, proceeding in the absence of a party who fails to appear, or a monetary sanction.

D. Instruction for telephonic hearings using CourtSolutions.

1. If necessary, create a CourtSolutions account online (creating an account is only necessary if the party does not already have an account).

Logon to <https://www.court-solutions.com/> to “Signup” for an account and to register a telephonic appointment for an upcoming hearing.

2. Register for a hearing with CourtSolutions.

After signing up and signing into their CourtSolutions account at <https://www.court-solutions.com/>, a party must register for a hearing (the button is on the on the right side of the screen).

Registration for a hearing is necessary for each hearing you have scheduled before the Court. Registration must occur no later than 12:00 noon on the business day prior to the hearing date.

- a. Enter the last name of the Judge to appear before and then select the appropriate name from the list.
- b. Enter the time and date of the hearing.
- c. Select participation status: Live or Listen Only.
- d. Enter the case name, case number, and, if applicable, the name of client.
- e. There is a box to click to agree to terms/conditions, and then press “Register”.
- f. CourtSolutions will send an email confirmation of the participation request.
- g. The court staff will first confirm that a granted motion to appear telephonically is on the docket. If there exists a granted motion, the court staff will approve the reservation.
- h. CourtSolutions will then send another email confirmation.

Note that the reservation received for a registered hearing may NOT be transferred to another person. If someone dials in with someone else’s registration information, the caller information presented to the court will not match the correct person.

3. Charges².

For lawyers and participants, registration and reservations are free.

Once a party dials into a call, the cost is a flat fee of \$70, per reservation, per judge, per day. If the hearing is adjourned for a break and the party rejoins the call later that day, there is no additional charge to rejoin the call. If the hearing is continued to another day, lawyers and participants will need to re-register and the flat fee will apply again when dialing in.

If a party does not timely join a call, no fee is charged. The Judge will have the party listed as having made a reservation, but the party is not charged. However, the hearing may proceed in their absence, and they may face sanctions from the Court.

Additionally, a party may notice that there is a charge on their card after making a reservation. When making a reservation, CourtSolutions places an authorization hold on the card. If the party does not join the call, the pending hold will be removed automatically several days later, and there will be no charge.

Any issues with billing shall be directed to the vendor. The Court is not responsible for the billing or collection of the fees incurred with CourtSolutions.

4. Order of Proceeding.

CourtSolutions does not place a call to counsel on the day of the hearing. It is counsel's responsibility to dial into the call not later than 10 minutes prior to the scheduled hearing. Logging into the CourtSolutions website for the hearing is not required but is helpful to unmute your line if the Court mutes it or to raise your hand to be recognized during the hearing.

Upon connecting to the call and at the time of the hearing, a party may hear the activity in the courtroom. Unless a joining party mutes their line, he/she joins the call as an active participant and can be heard. Failure to act appropriately on the line may result with the party being disconnected by Court. When the judge is ready to hear the case, appearances will be called. Each time a telephonic party speaks, he/she should identify them self for the record. The court's teleconferencing system allows more than one speaker to be heard, so the judge can interrupt a speaker to ask a question or redirect the discussion. When the judge informs the participants that the hearing is completed, the telephonic participant may disconnect, and the next case will be called.

5. Failure to appear.

If a party does not timely call and connect to the scheduled hearing, the hearing may proceed in their absence, and they may face sanctions from the Court for their failure to appear.

² As of February 2020

6. Other/Miscellaneous.

Telephonic appearances by multiple participants are only possible when there is compliance with every procedural requirement. Sanctions may be imposed when there is any deviation from the required procedures or the Court determines that a person's conduct makes telephonic appearances inappropriate. Sanctions may include denying the matter for failure to prosecute, continuing the hearing, proceeding in the absence of a party who fails to appear, or a monetary sanction.

II. BEST PRACTICES DURING TELEPHONIC APPEARANCES

1. Unless and until it is your turn to speak, please mute your audio to minimize background noise.
2. When you first speak—and each time you speak after someone else has spoken—please say your name. This may seem awkward, but is essential to making a good court record. If a transcript is later requested, it is sometimes difficult for the transcriber to know who is speaking, so properly identifying yourself will help to develop a clear record and transcript.
3. If available, a headset-microphone often provides better sound quality for listening and speaking.
4. If you intend to speak at the hearing, please find a quiet place from which to participate. Close all doors around you in the room to limit disruption.
5. Please use “land line” phones instead of a cellular device. If you must use a cellular phone, ensure you have a strong signal connection and your phone’s battery is fully charged.