

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FEDERAL CIRCUIT

REVISED PROTOCOLS FOR IN-PERSON ARGUMENTS

(December 22, 2021)

Starting with the September 2021 court sitting, the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit will resume in-person argument. This document sets forth Protocols that will govern appearances for that sitting and future sittings until further notice. See [Administrative Order 2021-10 \(June 22, 2021\)](#). These Protocols reflect the court's strong preference for in-person argument, based on the court's experience of its distinctive value, and the court's concern for the health and safety of the court and its staff, the bar, and the public. Because of the evolving public-health guidance concerning the COVID-19 pandemic, the court may modify these Protocols as needed. The current version and any updates will be posted online at <https://cafc.uscourts.gov/home/the-court/notices-announcements/covid-19-information-page/>.

In General

- Only arguing counsel and no more than one attendee whose presence is necessary to assist or supervise arguing counsel (e.g., a client, lawyer sitting second chair, or paralegal) are permitted access to the National Courts Building and the courtroom.
- Counsel and attendees may access only the main lobby, the public elevators, the courtroom designated for argument, and the lobby area and restrooms immediately outside of the designated courtroom. Following security screening in the main lobby, counsel and attendees must report directly to the assigned courtroom (instead of the usual practice of checking in with the Clerk's Office). Once arriving at the courtroom, counsel must check in with court staff. Counsel and associated attendee must sit together and only in the areas of the courtroom designated by court staff.
- Regardless of vaccination status, all counsel and attendees must wear masks and observe physical distancing while on the premises.
- Regardless of vaccination status, no counsel or attendee may enter the National Courts Building if they:
 - Tested positive for COVID-19 within the previous 14 days,

- Are currently awaiting the results of a COVID-19 test,
 - Have been directed to either isolate or self-quarantine by any physician, hospital, or health agency,
 - Have had symptoms consistent with COVID-19 within the previous 14 days, such as a temperature in excess of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit, chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, unusual fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea,
 - Have traveled internationally within the previous 14 days, or
 - Within the previous 14 days, have had known close contact (as defined by guidance provided by the CDC) with a person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19.
- **To enter the National Courts Building and the courtrooms, counsel and attendees will be required to show proof of having received a negative polymerase chain reaction [PCR] COVID-19 test administered within the prior 72 hours of oral argument. Counsel and attendees must have those PCR tests administered after completion of any commercial travel to the Washington, D.C area for argument.**
 - Arguing counsel who would prefer not to complete this process or who would prefer to appear remotely for any other reason may elect to do so by checking the applicable box on [Form 33A \(Certification of Compliance with Revised Protocols for In-Person Argument\)](#).
 - Arguing counsel must certify in advance of the sitting that they have read, understand, and will comply with these Protocols and that they are responsible for ensuring that an attendee has read and will comply with the Protocols while in the National Courts Building. Counsel's certification must be made on the form prescribed by the court ([Form 33A Certification of Compliance with Revised Protocols for In-Person Argument](#)) and filed electronically along with the [Response to Notice of Argument](#) or as otherwise directed by the Clerk's Office.

Intervening Events that Prevent In-Person Appearance

- The court understands that certain intervening events may prevent arguing counsel from being able to comply with these Protocols on the day of argument for COVID-19-related reasons.
- Counsel experiencing any COVID-19-related symptoms or who are required to quarantine should advise the Clerk's Office as soon as possible by calling 202-275-8049. Counsel must also promptly file a motion seeking leave to appear remotely at argument. If counsel's motion requires the disclosure of personal medical information, counsel is authorized, without the need for additional leave of court, to file a separate confidential and nonconfidential version of the motion pursuant to Federal Circuit Rule 25.1.
- Out of respect for the time and resources expended by the court and the parties in preparation for oral argument, every attempt will be made to go forward with the argument as scheduled.
- The court will not adjust argument solely because a counsel attendee is unable to enter the National Courts Building.

Notification of Potential Exposure

- Counsel must notify the Clerk's Office by calling 202-275-8049 if counsel or counsel's attendee has exhibited symptoms or tested positive for COVID-19 within five days after being in the National Courts Building.