



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



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Wisconsin Supreme Court
PO Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701-1688

RE: Rule Petition 19-01

Dear Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court:

I write to support the adoption of Rule Petition 19-01. I have been a Circuit Court Judge for 15 years. The first 14 years I had a stenographic court reporter and now have a digital audio reporter. When my last stenographic reporter moved to Douglas County, no stenographic reporter applied for the position. The only person to apply was a student in the stenographic reporting program who happened to live in Barron. I hired her as a digital audio reporter and she is concurrently working to obtain her degree and pass the test for a stenographic reporter. I believe that background gives me good perspective and insight into Rule Petition 19-01.

My strong preference is to have a live stenographic reporter. That being said, this past year's experience has dispelled any qualms I've had about using a digital audio reporter. I have conducted all types of hearings and trials and have found the digital audio reporting to work extremely well. It does require the Judge to pay attention to attorneys and witnesses using microphones but other than that issue, no additional problems have arisen.

Especially in a rural northwest Wisconsin, it is most difficult to attract and retain stenographic court reporters. The proposed changes in Rule 19-01 will be of great assistance to our rural courts. I unhesitatingly support the Director's Petition in its entirety.

Very truly yours,

James C. Babler
Circuit Judge Br. 1
JCB/bjr

cc: Director of State Courts, Randy Koschnick: Chief Judge Maureen Boyle