

March 14, 2019

Wisconsin Supreme Court
P.O. Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701-1688

RE: Rule Petition 19-01 relating to making the record

Dear Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court:

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring an accurate record in Wisconsin courtrooms. I have been a court reporter for 36 years and currently work in Winnebago County as an Official Court Reporter with Merit Certification. I write to convey my personal experiences with digital audio recording (“DAR”) that I believe are relevant as you consider making DAR an official means of taking the verbatim record in Petition 19-01.

My county recently installed DAR in our criminal court commissioner’s courtroom. I have been asked to prepare transcripts of preliminary examinations on only a couple of occasions. The quality of the recording was very good. But, in my opinion, the quality of the recording is not only a mechanical issue but is also very dependent on the people in the courtroom at the time who are actually creating the recording. We are very fortunate that our Commissioner Keberlien is extremely cognizant of being sure speakers identify themselves, do not speak over one another, controls “off the record” conversations, and has instructed his court clerk to be very diligent in her minute-taking. In order to maintain integrity of the verbatim record when DAR needs to be used in place a live reporter, these basic steps must be strictly adhered to.

We also have DAR installed in one of the circuit court branches in case of an emergency when no live reporter is available. In my opinion, in these instances, the verbatim recording could be very compromised by improper use of the mechanical recording device, speakers not identifying themselves, overlapping voices, etc. I’m glad to see that the Petition 19-01 includes language stating all possible attempts will be made to bring in a live reporter rather than resorting to DAR.

I appreciate your consideration of my experiences regarding DAR when considering Petition 19-01. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

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