



DeForest Police Department

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James Olson
Chief of Police

"Achieving Excellence Through Selfless Service"

February 28, 2021

Clerk of the Supreme Court
P.O. Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701

Dear Honorable Justices:

As a thirty-year veteran of the law enforcement profession and as the Chief of Police of the Village of DeForest Police Department, I would like to offer my support for Petition 20-09, which would allow for Videoconferencing Technology for judicial hearings.

In addition to the fiscal savings to my agency, this measure would also allow us to streamline operations and improve the service delivery model within our community. Reducing travel time to and from court appearances not only allows officers the ability to return to their duties expeditiously, but also provides agency leadership better oversight of their personnel.

The COVID-19 global pandemic has affected everyone's life. For law enforcement officers responding to legal process, the ability to appear in proceedings remotely limits the opportunity of exposure or transmission of the virus. Due to the pandemic, I have had to make difficult decision to change our service delivery model to protect the staff to the greatest extent possible. Appearing in court remotely would enable us to maintain a better stock of critical supplies as officers would not be using extra resources based on changing locations and encountering varying circumstances.

I believe that virtual appearances can improve court efficiency. Court appearances often conflict with the personal schedule of night shift officers. Virtual appearances would allow law enforcement to appear timely and succinctly, thus reducing appearance time and being able to resume personal life obligations and activities. The timelier the appearance will allow officers to strike a work-life balance and reduce levels of stress due to sleep deprivation caused by excessive hours from physically appearing in court.

The time for moving to a virtual court appearance is now. The infrastructure to host such appearances exists and the technology to allow such appearances is readily available. Courts have been utilizing virtual appearances in some manner for years and have ensured the Constitutional guarantees of the accused. Applying a video conferencing option for law enforcement not only streamlines operations, it also enhances safety, reduces stress, and improves operation efficiency in both the court and inside law enforcement organizations.

I thank the Honorable Justices for their consideration in this matter and express my gratitude for considering this measure.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Olson".

James A. Olson
Chief of Police