



Best Practices for Spectators Attending USCG Zoom Hearings

Hearings conducted by United States Coast Guard (USCG) Administrative Law Judges (ALJs) are open to the public unless ordered closed by the ALJ to protect national security, proprietary information, or sensitive information concerning minors or victims. If you would like to observe a virtual hearing, please review these important tips for participation as a spectator:

1. Prior to Hearing:

- a. Test Your Equipment – test your internet and Zoom connection prior to the hearing. The USCG uses the Zoom for Government application, which functions the same as the standard Zoom application. To test your setup prior to the hearing, visit <http://zoom.us/test>. You can log into Zoom via your phone or computer; logging in via computer is recommended but not required. If you log in via a computer, you will be given the option to download the Zoom app or log in via the browser. Either option is fine.
- b. Obtain Meeting ID & Password – make sure you are provided with the Zoom meeting ID and password for the hearing. To obtain the meeting ID and password, please email that request to the USCG Docketing Center at john.c.johns@uscg.mil. In this request, please provide your name and identify the reason for wanting to observe the hearing. Please make this request at least five days prior to the hearing. The Docketing Center will compile a list of anticipated spectators and provide that to the ALJ before the hearing. If you are not on this list, you will not be allowed to spectate the hearing. **Reminder: you are a spectator, not a party or a witness; therefore, you are not to contact the ALJ directly. The ALJ controls the hearing and interruptions or outbursts from a spectator will result in removal from the virtual hearing.**
- c. Your Surroundings – following these suggestions will improve the video quality:
 - i. Wear a solid color, not a pattern.
 - ii. Check lighting – ideally you want the main light source in the room facing you (strong light coming from behind you can blind the camera).
 - iii. Choose a solid neutral wall behind you.
 - iv. Set yourself up in a private, quiet room.

2. During Hearing:

- a. Log into Zoom for Government – shortly before the hearing is to begin, log into Zoom for Government. If you are using a computer, go to <https://www.zoomgov.com/> and use the Meeting ID and password to log into the hearing. If you are using a phone, log in through your Zoom app or enter the above internet address into your phone web browser.
- b. Provide Actual Name – when you log into Zoom, type in your actual name (not nickname) that you provided the Hearing Docket Clerk.
- c. Waiting Room – once you log into Zoom, you will be initially placed into a virtual “waiting room.” Once the ALJ is ready to admit spectators into the hearing, the ALJ will admit those people in the waiting room who are on the spectator list. If you did not previously identify yourself to the Hearing Docket Clerk as a potential spectator, you will not be allowed into the hearing.
- d. Formal Proceeding – even though this is a virtual hearing, this is still a formal adjudication, and the following spectator protocols must be followed:
 - i. Your **microphone must be muted at all times**. Spectators are allowed to observe, but may not participate in hearings.
 - ii. Your **camera must be on** at all times. While spectators do not participate in the hearing, the ALJ needs to see all individuals attending the hearing.
 - iii. If there is another person in the room who can overhear or see the hearing via your computer/phone, this person must be identified to the Hearing Docket Clerk as a spectator.
 - iv. **Recording parts or all of the hearing is absolutely prohibited.**