



CIRCUIT COURT OF THE STATE OF OREGON
FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
MULTNOMAH CIRCUIT COURT

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Oregon's First Remote Jury Trial

Oregon's first remote jury trial concluded on March 18, 2021. Beginning four days earlier, the civil trial was presided over by the Honorable Eric Dahlin of the Multnomah Circuit Court. From voir dire to verdict, the entire trial was held online. Upon conclusion, parties to the case were in agreement that online trials are a workable solution to the difficulties presented by in-person trials during a pandemic.

Potential jurors were notified on their initial summons that the trial would be held online. They were directed to an online response form, which included information about technological requirements to participate from home and the need to have a quiet space available. Potential jurors remained in their homes as lawyers questioned them individually to select the jury panel for trial. Those without the necessary space, computer equipment, or internet connection were offered the option of a room in the courthouse, where they could use court-issued equipment to participate. Once the panel was selected the trial began with only a clerk in the courtroom and the judge presiding from his chambers. Lawyers presented their case remotely from their offices.

Judge Dahlin noted many benefits of a remote trial, including that participants did not need to wear face coverings since they were not in contact, and witnesses from as far away as Europe being able to testify from their locations. Jurors also saved time by not having to travel to and from the courthouse or go through courthouse security. The trial utilized the WebEx platform and the judge felt that the technology "worked incredibly well" throughout the length of the trial. While he found that a large amount of work and significant behind-the-scenes staff involvement was necessary to conduct the first remote jury, he believes each subsequent trial will require less preparation. According to Judge Dahlin, "A remote jury trial is a workable substitute that worked quite well for the lawyers, the parties, the witnesses, the jury, and the court."

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