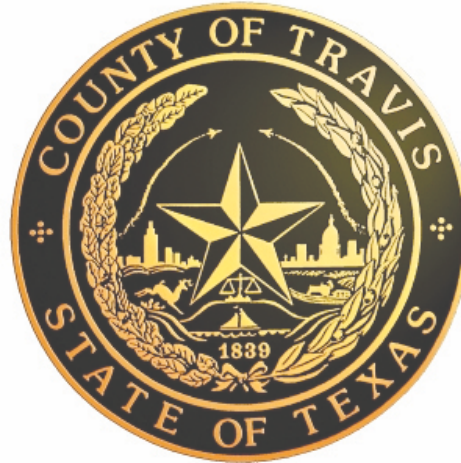


Travis County Civil Courts Pilot Jury Trial Program



**Local Administrative Judge Tim Sulak
Civil Presiding Judge Amy Clark Meachum
Judge Lora Livingston, 261st District Court
Judge Karin Crump, 250th District Court**

Travis County Remote Jury Trial Task Force Members

ABA President Kennon Wooten, Co-Chair

ABA Past President D. Todd Smith, Co-Chair

Judge Karin Crump

Travis County District Clerk Velva Price

Professor Tracy W. McCormack, UT School of Law

David Slayton, Office of Court Administration

Hon. Stephen Yelenosky

Tasha Barnes, TADC

Bob Burns, State Bar of Texas Rules Committee

Matt Dow, Texas ABOTA

Brian East, Disability Rights Texas

Mike Johnson, Austin Bar Litigation Section

Elizabeth Larrick, CATLA

Gary Schumann

Maitreya Tomlinson, Austin Bar Appellate Section

Jonathan Friday, Family Law Section

Chavela Crain, Texas Court Reporters Association

Overview of the Pilot Program

Why are we doing this?

- Texas Supreme Court's 18th COVID Emergency Order permits remote jury trials
- To test best practices and determine whether it is possible and beneficial to hold jury trials remotely until it is safe to return to the courthouse for in-person proceedings again

Is consent required for the Pilot Program?

- Yes. All parties must agree to participate in the pilot program
- Options: 1 or 2-day binding trials *or* 1-day nonbinding summary trials

Available Dates (jurors have been requested by the Travis County Jury Office)

- August 17, 2020;
- August 31, 2020; and
- September 14, 2020

Commitments of the Pilot Program

- Commitment to the 7th Amendment's Guarantee of a Right to a Jury Trial in a Civil Case
- Commitment to Efficient, Economic, and Equitable Dispute Resolution with Due Process
- Commitment to Flexibility
 - We are studying how other jurisdictions throughout the state and nation are conducting remote jury trials and we remain open to learning from them

Which Binding Trials are Best Suited for the Pilot Jury Program?

- Estimated to take less than 5 days, including jury selection and deliberation
- Limited issues and witnesses
- Desire to present case to a jury before 2021
- Agreeable to 6 jurors (instead of 12) for District Court Cases

What is a Summary Jury Trial (SJT)?

- A Summary Jury Trial is a forum for early case evaluation and development of realistic settlement negotiations
 - Tex. Civ. Prac. & Rem. Code § 154.026(a)
- Panel of 6 jurors
- Panel may issue a non-binding advisory opinion regarding liability, damages, or both

How are Travis County Civil Courts Conducting SJTs During COVID-19?

- Remotely via Zoom
- Using real jurors from Travis County central jury pool and a presiding Travis County District or County Court at Law Civil Judge
- Jury selection: 1 hour with 3 preemptory challenges per party
- Case will be presented, in a summarized format, to the empaneled jury of six
- Maximum of 2 hours per side to present evidence
- Jury deliberates and returns verdict *on the same day*
- At the conclusion of the trial, parties are ordered to mediate within 7 days (with a volunteer mediator, if available)

Potential Juror Access to Zoom

- Office of Court Administration (OCA) has grant funds available to provide internet connections and tablets to potential jurors who need them during the pilot program
- All technology provided by OCA will be returned to OCA after the SJT

Which Cases Are Best Suited for Travis County Summary Jury Trials?

- Cases pending in Travis County
- Cases scheduled for jury trial in 2020
- Cases estimated to take 3-5 days of trial
- Cases that have not settled due to a disparity in the evaluations of liability and/or damages
- All parties agree to participate in the SJT in good-faith

Comments? Interested in Scheduling a Remote Jury Trial or Summary Jury Trial?

- We welcome your ideas and suggestion for this pilot program
- To provide suggestions or to schedule a remote jury trial, email: 250.submission@traviscountytexas.gov