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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LOUISIANA FIFTH CIRCUIT COURT OF APPEAL FIRST TO HEAR ARGUMENT VIA ZOOM

The Louisiana Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal became the first Louisiana appellate court to hear oral arguments remotely when it successfully heard six arguments this week via the videoconferencing application, Zoom. Participating from their respective homes and offices, all eight Judges and fourteen attorneys convened in virtual courtrooms to argue the six cases on May 5th, 6th, and 7th. Dozens of observers and members of the public also logged on to view the arguments.

Since the start of the social distancing mandate in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fifth Circuit Judges, IT Department, and Clerk's Office have been diligently preparing and continually testing the technology. And these efforts paid off with six cases in which the technology worked as expected and allowed the Judges to question the attorneys and engage them on their legal arguments.

While this success bolsters confidence in the Court's ability to maintain operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, Chief Judge Susan Chehardy took a broader view, observing that the success of this technology "may be precipitating a sea change in court accessibility, not just in Louisiana, but nationwide." She added that along with the Fifth Circuit's eFiling and Case Management Systems, "this new technology is another valuable tool that helps support the Court's commitment to providing fair, timely, and accessible justice."

The Fifth Circuit is scheduled to next hear oral arguments in July 2020, though it is not known at this time whether they will be in a virtual setting or in the courthouse. While the building currently remains closed, the Fifth Circuit is open and accessible through its website and is operating at full capacity, though remotely. For updates and more information about the Court's operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, please visit the Court's website, www.fifthcircuit.org.

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