

# D.C. Court of Appeals to Stream Video For First Time

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*District of Columbia Court of Appeals. Photo: Diego M. Radzinski/NLJ.*

The District of Columbia's highest local court will live-stream video of oral arguments for the first time on June 17, the court announced Tuesday. A full sitting of the court is scheduled to hear an adoption case that day.

The D.C. Court of Appeals began streaming audio of all arguments in 2006. Chief Judge Eric Washington said in an email interview Tuesday that the court planned to video stream other en banc arguments, and expand the program to other arguments "when resources are available for additional technology."

"We are very pleased to utilize existing technology which will for the first time enable D.C. residents, and in fact, anyone on the internet, to observe the D.C. Court of Appeals, sitting as a full or en banc, court, in action," Washington said in a written statement.

Courts historically have pushed back against cameras in court, citing concerns about witness safety and jury protection. Those concerns are usually not a problem in appeals courts, however, where most hearings involve arguments exclusively between lawyers and judges.

The federal court system is in the midst of a pilot project to introduce cameras in courtrooms. The U.S. Supreme Court has long rejected requests to allow filming of oral arguments. The high court releases audio recordings after the fact.

In the fall of 2012, Judge Washington told Legal Times that the appeals court was “encouraged” by the success of audio streaming arguments and hoped to roll out video streaming in 2013. At the time, less than a dozen top state appellate courts offered both audio and video streaming of arguments, according to data from the National Center for State Courts.

The case scheduled for June 17 concerns how local judges weigh a child’s best interests in a fight over custody. A three-judge appeals panel ruled last summer that a trial judge erred in awarding custody of two young children to their foster parents instead of their aunt, who was the parents’ choice. The court didn’t award the aunt custody, though, instead sending the case back to the trial judge to give the aunt's petition the "weighty consideration" required.

The foster parents’ lawyers at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher petitioned the full court to reconsider the decision, arguing the panel’s ruling wrongly limited a judge’s ability to consider the risks of separating children from a home where they had a strong attachment.