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I am a family law attorney with 30 year of practice. I support the amendment to CR 39 that would allow judges the discretion to conduct bench trials over videoconferencing vs. in person trials. While I have some concern that the court could order a party to submit to a remote trial over objection, I trust that the judges will use their discretion in applying the rule.

The ability to appear via videoconferencing makes it easier on litigants and witnesses to appear without the imposition of travel to and from the Courthouse and reduces costs to litigants and witnesses, increases participation, and makes our justice system more accessible.

I have conducted several hearings and three divorce trials to date by Zoom and the videoconference format has worked well for presentation of evidence and testimony. Zoom trials have allowed for orderly trials during the pandemic and it is undoubtedly more efficient. There are great things about Zoom trials, although I would not want Zoom to be the automatic default post-pandemic rather than an option for the judge to consider.

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