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**From:** Befeler, Eric A <befe1@nationwide.com>  
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**Subject:** [External]Comments Re Future of Court Operations

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Good afternoon

I am writing in response to the Court's July 16, 2021 Notice to the Bar requesting comments on the proposal for the Future of Court Operations. As an insurance defense attorney who has been practicing in the Civil Division in New Jersey since the 1990s and is currently a trial attorney with Nationwide, I am writing to offer my strong support for continuing to conduct certain court events (including but not limited to Case Management Conferences, Motion Oral Arguments, Settlement Conferences and Mandatory Non-Binding Arbitration Hearings in the Civil Division) in a remote format. Since the COVID-19 pandemic first struck in March 2020 and we all had to become familiar with technology to participate in proceedings remotely, I have found that almost nothing has been lost by conducting these proceedings remotely via video; I admittedly am not a strong proponent of conducting any of these proceedings remotely via telephone, as I do believe that something is lost when we are not able to see one another. The amount of time that I save on a daily/weekly basis by not having to commute to court houses around the state and then having to wait around to be heard is incalculable. It not only enables me (and others) to be more productive, but means that we are not all wasting time on behalf of our clients. I have also found that counsel are much less likely to be late for proceedings that are conducted in a remote format, in part because we do not have to account for traffic or finding parking. Thank you for considering my input.

**Eric A. Befeler, Esq.**  
Senior Trial Attorney  
Law Office of Gerald F. Strachan  
90 Woodbridge Center Dr., Suite 330  
Woodbridge, N.J. 07095  
Work: (732) 582-3244 | Cell: (732) 221-3830  
[Befe1@nationwide.com](mailto:Befe1@nationwide.com)

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