



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **COURT TO PROVIDE LACOURTCONNECT FREE OF CHARGE DURING DELTA VARIANT SURGE USING ONE-TIME COVID STATE BUDGET FUNDING**

**\$15 Audio/Video Appearance Fee Will Be Waived for Hearings on or After September 7**

Presiding Judge Eric C. Taylor today announced the Court will waive the \$15 cost recovery fee for all hearings beginning Tuesday, September 7 for LACourtConnect (LACC), its remote courtroom appearance technology. The Court has elected to devote some of the one-time state budget funds provided by the Legislature for COVID-related backlogs to cover the cost of LACC for all litigants to encourage the use of remote appearances, which will greatly assist the Court in addressing its backlog of pending cases. Providing LACC at no cost also will help the Court in its ongoing efforts to strongly encourage remote appearances, especially as the Delta variant increases COVID-19 transmission in Los Angeles County.

"I applaud our statewide government for providing this one-time funding in the FY 2021/2022 state budget, which will allow the Court to make LACC more accessible to anyone who wants to appear remotely for hearings," Presiding Judge Taylor said. "The Court is taking a measured, responsible approach to return our operations to

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## **LACC\_FUNDING**

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pre-pandemic levels, and we are always seeking ways to increase safe access to justice. Using these one-time resources will help us extend that access to even more litigants, which will increase remote appearances during the Delta surge in LA County.”

LACC, developed and launched by the Court on an expedited basis at the start of the pandemic, provides a safe and convenient alternative to in-person appearances by allowing parties in certain cases to appear in court via audio or video. LACC promotes convenience, eliminates transportation, childcare and parking costs, and saves litigants from taking time off from work plus commuting time required to attend court proceedings in-person. LACC also reduces foot traffic in courthouses, which helps the Court achieve its chief goal of making courthouses as safe as possible during the pandemic.

Today’s announcement aligns with the findings of a [recent report](#) issued by the Judicial Council of California’s Workgroup on Post-Pandemic Initiatives, convened by Chief Justice Tani G. Cantil-Sakauye, which found that “remote proceedings allow individuals who face barriers in accessing the courts ... to efficiently resolve their court matters, and that providing access to the courts through the use of remote technology is an access to justice issue.” The report also found that remote appearance options increase participation and promote efficiencies in all case types. The report encourages the Governor and legislative leaders to support policies that expand and maximize remote access on a permanent basis for most court proceedings.

LACC was implemented at a time when the Court faced a 10 percent reduction in state funding and was forced to reduce staffing levels. As a result, the Court could only provide the service on a cost-recovery funding model. After the recently enacted state budget restored the 10 percent budget cut, provided funding for increases in the costs of doing business and included additional short-term funding for COVID-related backlogs,

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the Court is now able to increase the accessibility of LACC by covering the costs to offer this service.

“While the one-time COVID-backlog funding is a welcome resource, a permanent funding solution is needed to support programs like LACC, which increase access to justice and encourage efficiency in court operations,” Presiding Judge Taylor said.

Investments in the trial courts are especially important now as courts, including Los Angeles, begin to experience significant workload demands as pandemic-related delays must be addressed to move cases toward overdue resolution. Furthermore, the Court is working responsibly on ways to safely increase access to justice by shifting resources to manage caseloads, help settle more cases, offer more trial capacity by reopening departments closed prior to the pandemic, and be prepared for any increase in filings. These issues are particularly acute as the Court is funded at less than 75% of its funding need based on workload, making it the sixth worst-funded trial court in California. As a result, some judges are handling cases without staff support.

“I am hopeful that ongoing state funding will be provided to all trial courts in the future and especially to those courts, like Los Angeles, that are deemed under-funded,” Presiding Judge Taylor said.

For more information on how to sign up for LACC visit <https://my.lacourt.org/laccwelcome>. Also, follow the Court on Twitter ([@LASuperiorCourt](https://twitter.com/LASuperiorCourt)) and the Court’s website ([LACourt.org](https://www.lacourt.org)).



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