

**House Bill 1395**  
**Senate Appropriations**  
March 26, 2021

Good morning, Chairman Holmberg and members of the Committee. For the record, my name is Don Wolf and I am the Finance Director for the court system. The appropriation bill for the **judicial branch**, Senate Bill No. 2002, includes general fund appropriations for the following one-time funding items.

**Zoom monitors**– The court system is requesting **\$360,000** for video equipment for 41 courtrooms and 4 conference rooms. This equipment, which is specifically designed for Zoom, will greatly increase the number of court hearings that can be held remotely. The North Dakota Court System, like most court systems in the United States, has chosen Zoom as its preferred platform because of its ease of use, ability to do break out rooms and other features offered. There is a company by the name of D-TEN that produces a piece of Zoom-specific equipment that we are using to quickly convert courtrooms and conference rooms that have no video-capability at all into “Zoom rooms.” These monitors include a built-in computer, camera and audio equipment. The added functionality includes the ability to connect into courtroom sound systems for better official sound recording.

**Wi-Fi access points (one-time)** – We are requesting **\$157,600** to install Wi-Fi access points in 80 courtrooms statewide. As many of you know, our court records are maintained in electronic format so it is imperative that the judge and attorneys have access to them while in the courtroom. Additionally, many more attorneys are now maintaining their files electronically and most of the legal reference that a judge or attorney might need during a court proceeding are electronic. There are also more types of wireless technology being used in courtrooms. For example, the courtroom Zoom monitors will require additional band-width. We have identified 80 courtrooms with weak Wi-Fi signals that need to be supplemented with additional access points.

The court system received \$240,000 of Federal CARES funding in 2000 to purchase and install Zoom monitors in selected courtrooms. At the time the funding was requested, we were following the guidelines that the project needed to be completed by December 30, 2020. After our budget was submitted, the guidelines for expending the funding was extended until the end of 2021.

The Senate did not remove the funding in Senate Bill 2002 for the Zoom monitors and Wi-Fi access points, but did add a section of legislative intent for the court system to pursue the use of federal funds from the coronavirus relief fund to defray the cost of these two projects.

The House Government Operations Committee is currently reviewing Senate Bill 2002. The committee has informed us that their proposed amendments will exclude the general fund appropriation for these projects. Thus we are requesting an appropriation of **\$517,600** from available unspent coronavirus relief funds to be reallocated in House Bill 1395 for the Zoom monitors and installation of the Wi-Fi access points.

In conclusion, I would be happy to answer any questions.