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July 01, 2021

Virtual Juries We Can, But Should We? And If So, How?

Locking eyes with those seated in the jury box, a judge instructs the jury, "You may begin your deliberations." Everyone stands. The jurors file out of the courtroom, retiring to a secret room where they will discuss the evidence and law in an effort to reach a verdict. Jury trials are sacrosanct in our system of justice.

And then everything changed. When our world began to face the unrelenting spread of the novel coronavirus in early 2020, the number of in-person jury trials decreased and many were put on hold. But judges, lawyers, and others recognized the importance of keeping the courthouse doors open—even if virtually. Historically, courts move at a pace that would frustrate even the most patient sloth, as we form committees, study options, and analyze unintended consequences. So courts evolved. Fast.

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