

Oklahoma Supreme Court Authorizes Speech-to-Text Pilot Program

The Oklahoma Supreme Court has authorized a three-year, vendor-supported pilot program to test speech-to-text recording and cloud storage in selected district courts. The Court's October 12, 2026, order cites court reporter unavailability and calls for developing a statewide plan for counties with court reporter vacancies. The pilot program rules authorize the technology's use at all stages of civil and criminal proceedings in participating counties. Although statewide implementation has not been ordered, the pilot could shape future decisions about how Oklahoma captures and preserves court proceedings.

The pilot program rules preserve a critical role for certified court reporters: Only a certified court reporter may review, prepare, and certify a transcript of a proceeding, and a certified transcript constitutes the official record. Recordings, automated preliminary transcripts, and associated metadata are classified as judicial work product and are subject to restrictions on disclosure. Judges or their designees must operate the equipment and verify that it is functioning properly and recording the proceedings. The rules also prohibit using recordings and related data to train, develop, or improve artificial intelligence or machine learning models. For reporters preparing transcripts from these recordings, the completeness and quality of the initial capture will be critical.

Oklahoma's pilot deserves the attention of NCRA members nationwide because its results could influence how other courts address court reporter vacancies. In his dissent, Justice Combs noted that the Court adopted the rules without seeking input from the court reporters' task force established in 2017.

That evaluation should consider accuracy, recording failures, confidentiality, transcript turnaround, and total costs, while recognizing the work reporters perform during proceedings to ensure a complete and reliable record. As the pilot moves forward, continued investment in reporter recruitment and retention should remain a priority.