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January 23, 2007

The Honorable Shirley Abrahamson, Chief Justice
Wisconsin Supreme Court
Room 16 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI 53701

Dear Chief Justice Abrahamson:

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chair of the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on Disaster Preparedness Planning. One of the issues the committee has been looking at is continuity of government operations during an emergency.

A concern has been raised that the court system should have in place policies to address a situation when it is unsafe for parties to litigation to be physically present at the same location at the same time. For example, during a pandemic, it may not be safe to bring parties together in a courtroom. The committee wanted to determine whether the court system has policies that allow court proceedings to occur without all of the parties being present, as long as they can be present through an audio or video link-up. If the court system does not have such policies in place, we strongly encourage you to adopt them. Also, if statutory changes are needed to implement any such policies, could you please let me know and I will be glad to consider them.

Thank you for giving your attention to this important issue and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Representative Joan Ballweg, Chair
Special Committee on Disaster Preparedness Planning

JB:wu

cc: A. John Voelker, Director of State Courts