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**A stenographic court reporter would have provided a high-quality, accurate record in the
Alex Murdaugh murder trial**
It's happened again; NCRA cites why digital recording is not failsafe

RESTON, Va., Feb. 15, 2023 —The use of a stenographic court reporter on day 10 of the ongoing murder trial of Alex Murdaugh accused of killing his wife and son in South Carolina, would have produced a more accurate rough draft of testimony than what was captured by digital means on day 10 of the proceedings.

The [conversation](#) videoed between the judge and the defense attorney in the case cites that the transcript was a the result of a deficient product provided by a company that produced it not having perfected their software. The defense attorney also noted that the firm paid \$450 for the rough draft that was not of any use.

“The proceedings are only as good as their accurate rendition, whether we are providing a record or access. That’s why we are important,” said NCRA President Jason T. Meadors, FAPR, RPR, CRR, CRC, a freelance court reporter and firm owner from Fort Collins, Colo. “Reporters and captioners are technology and perform in ways that other technologies cannot match,” he added.

Court reporters and captioners rely on the latest in technology to use stenographic machines to capture the spoken word and translate it into written text in real time. These professionals work both in and out of the courtroom reporting court hearings and depositions word for word, depositions, providing live captioning of events, and assisting members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities with gaining access to information, entertainment, educational opportunities, and more.

“What we do is beyond a service. It is a sacred duty. Whether we work as captioners, reporters, or legal videographers, society generally and people specifically place a level of trust in us that is as enduring as it is profound,” Meadors said.

“We take that trust and live up to it with the importance it demands. The people reviewing our record, whether they are people needing access to the hearing world, paralegals and lawyers preparing for settlement or trial, an attorney sweating over an appeal brief, or an appellate court that has to know precisely what was said to provide a precise analysis, depend completely on our skills, our precision, our work ethic, and our professionalism to do what is right by the people affected and the goals of fairness and justice for us all.”

In December 2021, a similar situation occurred in the case of [Darrell Brooks](#). Having a stenographic court reporter present would have most certainly guaranteed that an official verbatim record of prior proceedings would have been available to the judge, potentially changing the



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outcome of a bond hearing that resulted in his release just days prior to the horrific and tragic holiday parade incident Brooks was charged with, according to the NCRA.

“We don’t know if having a verbatim record would have changed the judge’s decision in terms of the bond fees, but having an official record of previous charges to review against Mr. Brooks just days before the parade incident might have resulted in a very different outcome, as well as having that record available for review so that if a reversal of ruling was needed, then it could be pursued before this individual was released resulting in this harm to innocent people,” said then NCRA President [Debra A. Dibble](#), RDR, CRR, CRC, a freelance court reporter and captioner from Salt Lake City, Utah, with more than 30 years of experience.

“NCRA and its membership do not condone the use of digital recorders for record-making purposes. Reasons include issues surrounding chain of custody, security of the record, and accuracy of the record,” she added.

NCRA notes that in this day and age of deep fakes and tampering with audio and theft of voice and image, a certified stenographic court reporter is the best protection for ensuring that what is captured in legal proceedings is accurate and truthful as well as enforcing personal privacy laws. The record is imperative to liberty, human rights, and in this case even lives and should never have been put at risk by using an inferior method of keeping the record.

To arrange an interview with President Meadors or a working court reporter or captioner, or to learn more about the lucrative and flexible court reporting or captioning professions and the many job opportunities currently available, contact pr@ncra.org.

[About NCRA](#)

The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) has been internationally recognized for promoting excellence among those who capture and convert the spoken word to text for more than 100 years. NCRA is committed to supporting its more than 13,000 members in achieving the highest level of professional expertise with educational opportunities and industry-recognized court reporting, educator, and videographer certification programs. NCRA impacts legislative issues and the global marketplace through its actively involved membership.

Forbes has named court reporting as one of the best career options that do not require a traditional four-year degree. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the court reporting field is expected to grow by 7 percent through the year 2028, faster than the projected employment growth across all occupations. According to [247/WallSt.com](#), the court reporting profession ranks sixth out of 25 careers with the lowest unemployment rate, just 0.7 percent. Career information about the court reporting profession — one of the leading career options that do not require a traditional four-year degree — can be found at [NCRA DiscoverSteno.org](#).