

VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE CITY OF PORTSMOUTH

ORDER REGARDING THE USE OF PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN THE COURTHOUSE AND COURTROOMS

The Court finds it necessary to ensure the orderly administration of justice, maintain courtroom decorum, and protect the integrity of judicial proceedings.

Accordingly, it is hereby **ORDERED**:

1. Definition of Portable Electronic Device

For purposes of this Order, the term "Portable Electronic Device" shall include, but not be limited to, a personal computer, laptop computer, tablet computer, mobile telephone (including a cellular phone, any form of telephone with a camera, audio, or video recording or transmission capabilities), electronic calendar, e-book reader, "smart" watch, "smart" glasses, and any other electronic device capable of capturing, recording, or transmitting audio or video.

2. Applicability Within the Courthouse and Courtrooms

Except as expressly provided in this Order, Portable Electronic Devices are prohibited within the Portsmouth Courthouse, subject to the rules, restrictions, and exclusions set forth herein.

A presiding judge may, in his or her own discretion, authorize the possession and use of Portable Electronic Devices within his/her courtroom and may impose such conditions and limitations as deemed appropriate. When authorized, all devices shall remain in silent mode at all times and shall be used solely for the purposes and in the manner approved by the presiding judge.

Photography, video recording, audio recording, live streaming, or transmission of any information from inside a courtroom, by any means or media, is strictly prohibited without prior written authorization of the presiding judge.

3. Confiscation

Any person who uses a Portable Electronic Device in violation of this Order or any other court order or policy may be removed from the courthouse, found in contempt of court, and subject to any other penalties as provided by law.

Any Portable Electronic Device used in violation of this Order or any other court order or policy may be confiscated. The Portsmouth Sheriff's Deputies and courthouse security personnel shall not be liable for any loss or damage of a confiscated device pursuant to this Order.

4. Storage

No lockers will be provided in the Portsmouth Courthouse to store Portable Electronic Devices while visiting the building.

5. Exceptions

The prohibitions set forth in this Order shall not apply to the following individuals, subject to any limitations imposed by the Court:

- Attorneys duly admitted to practice in the Commonwealth of Virginia;
- Clerks of court and court personnel;
- Courthouse security personnel;
- Jurors, who shall only be permitted to use such devices during breaks in proceedings or as otherwise expressly directed by the Court;
- Law enforcement officers; and
- Members of the press may possess Portable Electronic Devices provided they display valid credentials and use such devices in witness rooms only, unless otherwise permitted, and shall comply with all requirements of Virginia Code § 19.2-266;
- Any individual having received prior authorization from a presiding judge.

Except as otherwise provided herein, Portable Electronic Devices are strictly prohibited within the Portsmouth Courthouse.

6. Additional Limitations by Judges

Nothing in this Order shall limit the authority of any judge to further restrict or prohibit the possession or use of any Portable Electronic Device:

- Pursuant to Virginia Code § 19.2-266, including regulation of media coverage of judicial proceedings;
- When the possession or use of such device interferes with, or poses a threat to, the administration of justice, safety, or security; or
- For any other reason deemed appropriate by the Court.

7. Enforcement

The Portsmouth Sheriff's Deputies and courthouse security personnel are authorized to enforce this Order. Any individual found in violation may be subject to removal from the courthouse, confiscation of the device, or other sanctions as determined by the Court.

8. Effective Date

This Order shall take effect immediately and remain in effect until further order of the Court.

The Clerk of the Court is directed to make a copy of this Order publicly available online and to post copies of this Order prominently at all courthouse entrances, in the Clerk's Office, and in other conspicuous locations within the courthouse.

It is so ORDERED.

Enter: 1 / 29 / 2026

Brian C. Spay
Chief Judge

Mark J. Mann
Judge

John H. ...
Judge

W. L. ...
Judge