

VIRGINIA:

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT,
GENERAL DISTRICT COURT, AND
JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS DISTRICT COURT
OF RAPPAHANNOCK COUNTY**

IN RE: ALL PERSONS AND ITEMS ENTERING THE COURTHOUSE

ORDER

It appearing that certain rules and procedures should be implemented for the orderly, safe and efficient dispatch of business and for proper decorum before all of the Courts of Rappahannock County, it is therefore, **ORDERED** as follows:

1. Courthouse

References to "courthouse" as used herein shall mean the Rappahannock County Courthouse.

2. Prohibited Items and Substances.

No explosive devices or materials, illegal substances, alcohol, marijuana, defensive or offensive weapons (including but not limited to those items listed in Va. Code § 18.2-308), ammunition, potentially dangerous objects or objects prohibited by this order shall be brought into the courthouse, including the courtrooms, the clerk's offices, the juvenile court services unit, any offices located within the courthouse, or any public areas thereof. Any such object is subject to seizure and forfeiture. Court security officers on duty and sworn law enforcement officers in uniform or prominently displaying a badge of authority are exempted from this prohibition with respect to items required of such officers in the discharge of their duties. Court security officers on duty and sworn law enforcement officers in uniform may carry their officially issued weapons into the courthouse. Sworn law enforcement officers allowed to carry weapons as part of their employment, but not in uniform, shall deposit such weapons in a secure area designated by the Sheriff immediately upon entering the courthouse.

3. **Search and Seizure/Forfeiture.**

Upon entering the courthouse, all persons except court security officers on duty and sworn law enforcement officers in uniform shall submit to either an electronic search or physical "pat down", or both, of his or her person at the request of any court security officer. All persons also shall exhibit to such officers any electronic devices of any description, the contents of any parcel, handbag, carrying case, or container of whatever nature and shall be subject to an electronic and physical search at the request of any court security officer. After entry and any initial search described above, if there develops a reasonable articulable suspicion that an item not permitted in the courthouse is in the possession of an individual or contained in any parcel or any other container, such person or parcel or container also shall be subject to the above-described search while in any area of the courthouse. All items not permitted by this order shall be subject to seizure and forfeiture. The Chief Judge of the Circuit Court may exempt specific staff entering prior to the normal opening of the courthouse from the requirements of this paragraph.

4. **Tobacco and Smoke Free Building.**

Smoking, the use of tobacco or tobacco products and the use of e-cigarettes and vaping is prohibited in all areas of the courthouse.

5. **Food and Beverages.**

Food and beverages may not be consumed in any public areas of the courthouse. Water may be consumed in the courthouse but may only be brought into a courtroom as provided in paragraph 11.

6. **Animals.**

No animals, except *bona fide*, credentialed service animals (i.e., not "emotional support" animals), and canine dogs accompanied by their assigned deputy, that are on the premises in the investigation or detection of criminal activity, shall be admitted into the courthouse absent written permission from

the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court.

7. **Portable Electronic Devices; Use in the Courthouse; Violations**

- a. “Portable electronic devices” means (i) a personal laptop; (ii) a tablet; (iii) a mobile telephone, including a cell phone and any telephone with a camera, audio and video recording capabilities, and transmission capabilities; (iv) an electronic calendar; (v) an electronic book reader; (vi) a smart watch; or (vii) any other electronic personal communication device. “Portable electronic device” does not include a camera, a video camera, video or audio recording equipment, or a recording device that is not otherwise a component of a portable electronic device.
- b. Portable electronic devices may be brought into the courthouse following an inspection, electronic or otherwise, by a court security officer. Only devices that are the property of the individuals authorized under this Order (or their employer when such device is assigned to their use by their employer) may be brought into the courthouse by such individuals. An authorized individual may not bring devices of others into the courthouse. Portable electronic devices may be used only by individuals authorized in this paragraph to possess such items in the public areas of the courthouse (i.e., not in a courtroom or in a conference room adjacent to a courtroom), or in an employee’s assigned private work area, and should be used discreetly in order to respect the rights of others. Upon entering the *courthouse* all devices must be placed on silent or vibrate mode and not used for any purpose except as provided in paragraph 9(d) or unless authorized by a presiding judge.
- c. Any portable electronic device used in violation of this Order may be confiscated by court security and the court or sheriff’s department responsible for providing court security shall not be liable for any damage to or loss of such confiscated portable electronic device.

- d. Any use of a portable electronic device *in the courthouse* to take photographs, make audio or video recordings, play music or transmit live audio or video streaming (both with and without earphones and ear buds) is prohibited except with prior written authorization by a judge of the circuit court. Any use of a portable electronic device *in a courtroom* is prohibited except with prior written permission of the presiding judge of that courtroom.

Mobile telephones (e.g., cell phones) may be used to make and receive calls **only** outside the front entrance to the courthouse. Use of mobile telephones to make and receive calls in any other areas of the courthouse is a violation of this Order (see Par. 7(c)). In consideration for others working in and using the courthouse, persons making or receiving calls must not speak in a loud voice and must not use profanity, vulgar, insulting or offensive language.

8. Portable Electronic Devices in the Courtroom.

- a. **Requirements before entering a courtroom and permitted uses.** All portable electronic devices shall be silenced (i.e., no audio or vibration setting) prior to entering the courtroom. These devices shall be silenced in such a manner that no calls, messages, alerts, or audible sound is capable of being emitted. Sworn court reporters designated to a case may record the proceedings to create an accurate record of the proceedings. **Unless specifically authorized by a presiding judge, no device may be used in a courtroom or in a conference room adjacent to a courtroom.**
- b. **Permitted uses when a case is called for a hearing.** Once a specific case is called for a hearing, and with permission of the presiding judge, the attorneys appearing in that case (and their support staff if authorized by the presiding judge for the specific case) shall be

allowed to use their portable electronic devices solely for access to legal research, their professional calendars, for scheduling, as calculators, and for access to case related files while the case is before the court for hearing. Such devices shall be silenced in such a manner that no calls, messages, alerts, or audible sound is capable of being emitted.

- c. **Use of evidence from a portable electronic device.** Any person needing to use a portable electronic device to present evidence in a case must notify and receive permission of the presiding judge at the commencement of the case, or prior thereto, to allow the presiding judge an opportunity to have court security monitor the use of the portable electronic device to ensure that the device is used strictly for the evidentiary purposes allowed and that no disallowed applications (e.g., video recording applications) have been activated. Nothing herein shall be construed to permit any courthouse personnel to search or access any data on the portable electronic device of a visitor to the court, including during a security screening.

9. **Decorum in the Courtroom.**

All persons entering the courtroom must remove hats (except for religious headware) and sunglasses before entering. All persons must be seated after entering the courtroom when court is in session. No food, food items, or drinks are allowed in the courtrooms.

Attorneys, parties, and witnesses scheduled to testify may bring one commercially bottled water (not carbonated or flavored) in the original non-glass and non-aluminum container into the courtroom; however, water may be consumed by attorneys and parties only during such time when their case is being heard by the court. A witness may only consume water when testifying.

No gum chewing is allowed in the courtroom. All gum must be properly disposed of prior to entering the courtroom.

The presiding judge in each courtroom has authority over all matters of decorum and safety in the courtroom in which he or she is presiding.

12. **Attire.**

All persons entering a courtroom must be properly attired at the discretion of the presiding judge.

13. **Failure to Comply.**

Failure to comply with the provisions of this order may result in the loss of privileges, seizure, forfeiture of devices and/or contempt.

14. **Copies to be Posted.**

Copies of this Order shall be posted in an accessible, prominent and conspicuous manner at the entrance to the courthouse; the clerk's offices; on the district and circuit court's Virginia Judicial System website(s) or equivalent website(s); and on the local government website if any) where district and circuit court information is communicated to the public.

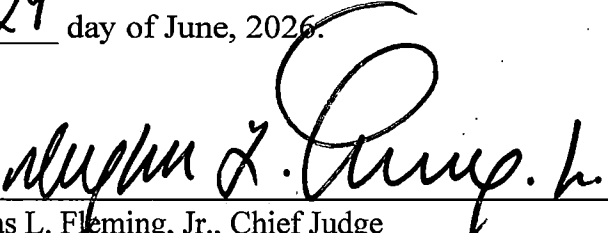
15. **Prior Orders.**

This Order supersedes all prior orders of the court with respect to such matters.

16. **Effective Date.**

This Order is effective July 1, 2026.

ENTERED this ^{TC} 29 day of June, 2026.



Douglas L. Fleming, Jr., Chief Judge
20th Judicial Circuit