

VIRGINIA: IN THE COURTS FOR THE 16TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

STANDING ORDER ON ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Effective July 10th, 2026, it shall be the **STANDING ORDER** of this Court that the possession or use of electronic devices inside the Courts for the 16th Judicial Circuit shall be limited as outlined herein.

It is hereby **ORDERED** that on the effective date and thereafter:

- I. A judge may provide prior written judicial authorization for the possession or use of an electronic device that would not otherwise be permitted.
 - A. Only the judge assigned to the case may authorize the otherwise impermissible use of an electronic device during a judicial proceeding.¹
 - B. Any prior written judicial authorization related to the press shall comply with all requirements of § 19.2-266 of the Code of Virginia.
 - C. The individual authorized must bring a physical copy of the prior written judicial authorization with them.
 - D. Strict compliance with all terms of the authorization is required.
- II. The Clerk of the Circuit Court, the Clerk of the General District Court, and their designees may provide prior written authorization to possess or use an electronic device for research purposes, including title searches.
 - A. The individual authorized must bring a physical copy of the prior written judicial authorization with them.
 - B. Strict compliance with all terms of the authorization is required.
- III. The use of any electronic device to take photographs, make audio or video recordings, or transmit live audio or video in any manner, including by livestreaming, is strictly prohibited except as otherwise provided herein.
- IV. The possession or use of any electronic device during any judicial proceeding is strictly prohibited except as otherwise provided herein.
- V. All electronic devices must remain turned off or silenced except as otherwise provided herein.

¹ The procedures for requesting authorization differ by court. Information is available online or upon request.

- VI. Electronic devices shall not be left unattended unless the powered-off device is secured in a locker inside the building's entrance or except as otherwise provided herein.
- VII. Members of the public have qualified authorization to bring cellular phones, smart watches, smart glasses, and fitness trackers ("designated electronic devices") past the security area at the entrance except as otherwise provided herein. Licensed attorneys and credentialed members of the press are not considered members of the public for the purposes of this Order. See §§ X and XI.
- A. All designated electronic devices must be powered off and placed in a locked Yondr pouch or similar item or device, except as otherwise provided herein.
 - B. Members of the public are permitted to bring designated electronic devices into judicial proceedings because the locked pouch prevents any unauthorized use of the device.
 - C. The pouch must remain locked inside the building unless otherwise directed by a judge or the exceptions outlined in section IX apply.
 - D. Members of the public attending a ceremonial event are not permitted to bring cellular phones, smart watches, smart glasses, and fitness trackers into the courthouse except as otherwise provided herein.
- VIII. Members of the public are prohibited from bringing other electronic devices past the security area at the entrance except as otherwise provided herein.
- IX. The possession and use of any electronic device that serves a medical purpose ("medical electronic device") is permitted. The term "medical electronic device" shall include but is not limited to electronic devices that aid hearing or one of the other senses, measure blood sugar or blood pressure, provide medication, or express breast milk.
- A. A smart watch or fitness tracker will not be considered a medical electronic device solely because it is used to monitor or track general fitness and health data.
 - B. Smart glasses with prescription lenses may not be worn. If the electronic function of the glasses is related to aiding sight, maybe permitted by the presiding Judge. The device may remain powered on but must not be accompanied by any other electronic devices except as otherwise provided herein.
 - C. If a cellular phone is necessary to control or assist the necessary functions of a medical electronic device, it is the responsibility of the member of the public requiring a phone for the use of an electronic medical device to request a medical device pouch upon entry to the courthouse. The phone will remain turned on and will be placed in a Yondr pouch or similar item or device, specifically designed to promote security, while still allowing the

phone to communicate with the medical device. The medical device pouch shall remain locked while inside the courthouse. Should the need arise to access the phone to control the medical device, a designated member of court staff will unlock the medical device pouch without judicial authorization if assistance is sought outside of the courtroom. If the need to access the phone arises inside the courtroom, the authorization of the presiding judge shall be sought and the presiding judge, in their discretion, shall direct whether the medical device pouch shall be unlocked during the proceedings or whether a brief recess shall be ordered. After the phone is used for the required purpose, the designated member of court staff that assists in unlocking the medical device pouch shall ensure that the phone is placed back in the pouch and that the pouch is locked.

- X. Attorneys licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth, or another state (“counsel”) are permitted to possess and use electronic devices as provided herein. Members of legal teams that are not licensed attorneys, i.e. paralegals, investigators, and tech assistance personnel, must proceed as outlined in sections I, II, and VII.
- A. Counsel may be required to produce a bar card or other evidence of licensure and photo identification upon entry.
 - B. Counsel may bring any electronic device that is not a video camera or web camera into the courtrooms including, but not limited to cell phones, computers, tablets, projectors, televisions, and e-book readers.²
 - C. At any court proceeding, counsel may make an oral request to record audio. If the request is granted by the presiding judge, counsel may make an audio recording of the proceedings for case-related purposes. The recording shall not be shared except as may be necessary for the case or as otherwise permitted by the presiding judge. Public distribution of a recording of a proceeding, including posting or sharing on social media, is strictly prohibited.
 - D. While in the courtrooms, counsel shall only use electronic devices when necessary for the case as hand, i.e. for the presentation of evidence or scheduling purposes. Other necessary business, including necessary phone calls, may be conducted in a witness room with the door shut.
- XI. Representatives of the news media (“members of the press”) are permitted to possess and use laptop computers, cell phones, and tablets past the security area at the entrance, provided:
- A. Members of the press seeking to possess or use such laptop computers, cell phones, and tablets must display valid credentials.

² Systems for two-way audio-visual communication are available for use in an authorized virtual hearing or for an authorized virtual appearance.

- B. Use of such laptop computers, cell phones, and tablets must occur in an available witness room.
- C. Members of the press shall not use any electronic device anywhere other than an available witness room except as otherwise provided herein.
- D. Members of the press shall comply with all requirements of § 19.2-266 of the Code of Virginia.

XII. The possession or use of electronic devices may be further limited or banned by a judge for any reason; reasons may include, but are not limited to, the following: (i) to regulate media coverage of judicial proceedings, see Va. Code § 19.2-266; (ii) prevent actual or potential interference with the administration of justice; or (iii) circumvent any actual or potential threat to safety or security.

XIII. The cost of this program shall be paid for by the Sheriff's office or which agency is responsible for the security of the Courthouse and Courtrooms.

Any person using an electronic device in violation of this or any other court order, in violation of the terms of an authorization, or in violation of any other oral or written directive may be removed from the courthouse, found in contempt of court, and subject to other penalties as provided by law. Any electronic device used in the violation may be confiscated. The Sheriff shall not be responsible or liable for any damage to or loss of a confiscated device.

The Clerk of Court of this Court is **DIRECTED** to record and keep this Order upon the order books. The Clerk is further directed to make a copy of this Order publicly available online and to post copies at the entrance of the courthouse and in the office of the Clerk.

It is so **ORDERED**.

Enter: Claude V. Worrell, II
Claude V. Worrell, II, Chief Judge, 16th Judicial Circuit
City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, Culpeper County,
Fluvanna County, Goochland County, Greene County,
Louisa County, Madison County and Orange County