

VIRGINIA: IN THE 29TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

ALL CIRCUIT COURTS:

ALL GENERAL DISTRICT COURTS:

ALL JUVENILE AND DOMESTIC RELATIONS DISTRICT COURTS:

BUCHANAN, DICKENSON, RUSSELL AND TAZEWELL COUNTY

PRESENT: THE HONORABLE RICHARD C. PATTERSON, Chief Judge - Circuit
THE HONORABLE JACK S. HURLEY, JR., Judge - Circuit
THE HONORABLE MICHAEL L. MOORE, Judge - Circuit
THE HONORABLE BRIAN K. PATTON, Judge - Circuit
THE HONORABLE REECE HALE ROBERTSON, Judge - Circuit
THE HONORABLE GEORGE R. BRITTAIN, II, Chief Judge - GDC
THE HONORABLE JOSHUA H. NEWBERRY, Judge - GDC
THE HONORABLE MARTHA P. KETRON, Chief Judge - JDR
THE HONORABLE MICHAEL J. BUSH, Judge - JDR
THE HONORABLE LAURA F. O'QUINN, Judge - JDR

IN RE: Possession and use of portable electronic devices in all Courts and Courthouses within the 29th Judicial Circuit.

CASE MGMT. NO: 26-224

ORDER REGARDING PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

This day came the Chief Judge and all other Judges of the 29th Judicial Circuit, *sua sponte*, regarding Virginia Code Section 17.1-128.2 in order to set the policy for the possession and use of portable electronic devices in all courts and the courthouses of the 29th Judicial Circuit; as such,

It is **ADJUDGED, ORDERED AND DECREED** as follows:

1. Portable electronic devices (specifically (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) **ARE ALLOWED** in the Courthouses of the 29th Judicial Circuit.
2. Portable electronic devices which are **NOT ALLOWED** include a camera, a video camera, video or audio recording equipment, a recording device that is not otherwise a component of a portable electronic device or any other portable electronic device not specifically mentioned in paragraph 1 herein **UNLESS** specifically authorized by a Judge or by this Order.

3. All portable electronic devices shall be required to be screened by Court Security personnel upon entry to any courthouse in the 29th Judicial Circuit.
4. Each specific courthouse within the 29th Judicial Circuit may institute various systems to lock, block signals, house or store portable electronic devices that are brought into the courthouse. In the event that a specific courthouse utilizes such a system, **EXCEPT** for the following individuals mentioned below, all parties who bring a portable electronic device into that courthouse **MUST** comply with this system/requirement unless otherwise authorized by a presiding Judge of that courthouse:
 - a. Law enforcement officers in the performance of their duties;
 - b. Attorneys and their staff members;
 - c. The Clerk of Court and any of their staff members;
 - d. Employees of title examination companies in the performance of their duties as approved by Court Security;
 - e. Court reporters in the performance of their duties;
 - f. Elected officials and their employees in the performance of their duties;
 - g. Judges, including retired judges and their staff members;
 - h. Courthouse maintenance personnel in the performance of their duties;
 - i. Delivery persons and vendors in the performance of their duties as approved by Court Security;
 - j. Such individuals and members of the media in the performance of their duties and as approved by Court Security.
5. In the event that a particular court or courthouse in the 29th Judicial Circuit does **NOT** utilize a system to lock, block signals, house or store portable electronic devices that are brought into the courthouse, with the exceptions set forth in this Order, the **POSSESSION** of portable electronic devices is **ALLOWED** in courtrooms; however, the **USE** of portable electronic devices in the courtrooms is **NOT ALLOWED EXCEPT** for the following individuals:
 - a. Court Security in the performance of their duties;
 - b. Attorneys and their staff members;
 - c. The Clerk of Court and any of their staff members;
 - d. Court reporters in the performance of their duties;
 - e. Judges, including retired judges and their staff members.
6. All portable electronic devices shall be required to be silenced **AT ALL TIMES** unless permission is granted by a Judge.
7. In the event that a court participant needs to access data on their phone for evidentiary purposes, court approval **MUST** be granted by a Judge prior to accessing the phone data while in a courtroom.
8. Any use of a portable electronic device in the courthouse or courtrooms to take photographs, make audio or video recordings, or to transmit live audio or video streaming shall be **PROHIBITED** except with the prior written authorization by a Judge.

9. Every specific court or Judge may institute additional rules regarding the use of portable electronic devices for their specific courtrooms and display those rules in the hallway outside of their specific courtroom.

It is further **ADJUDGED, ORDERED AND DECREED** that any person possessing or using a portable electronic device in violation of this Order may be removed from the courthouse, found in contempt of court, and be subject to prosecution for other violations of law as may be applicable. A conviction of summary contempt is punishable by a fine of up to \$250.00 or up to ten (10) days of incarceration. Punishment of plenary contempt is punishable by confinement in jail for not more than twelve (12) months and a fine of up to \$2,500.00, either or both. In addition, any portable electronic device used in violation of this Order or related Court Order may be confiscated, and the Sheriff shall not be responsible or liable for any damages to or loss of a confiscated device.

It is further **ADJUDGED, ORDERED AND DECREED** that the Clerk of Court of each respective county in the 29th Judicial Circuit shall post a copy of this Order at all public entrances to the courthouse and all the courtrooms and transmit copies of this Order to all members of the respective Bars of each county in the 29th Judicial Circuit.

Enter this 23rd day of June, 2026.



Richard C. Patterson, Chief Judge
29th Judicial Circuit