

VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE CITY OF NORFOLK

IN RE: PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICE POLICY FOR THE NORFOLK COURTS

ORDER

Pursuant to Virginia Code § 17.1-128.2, the Court hereby orders:

I. Purpose

- A. To maintain courthouse safety, security, proper behavior, order, and the administration of justice while ensuring reasonable access to the courts and compliance with Virginia law governing portable electronic devices.
- B. This policy applies solely to visitors to the court and shall not infringe upon the right of the Sheriff to enforce any policy for persons not defined as visitors to the court under Virginia law governing portable electronic devices.

II. Definitions

- A. "Portable Electronic Device" shall have the same meaning as provided by Virginia law and includes personal laptops, tablets, mobile telephones, smart watches, electronic book readers, electronic calendars, and other electronic personal communication devices.
- B. "Visitor to the Court" shall have the same meaning as provided by Virginia law.

III. Possession and Use of Portable Electronic Devices

The following policies and procedures govern the possession and use of Portable Electronic Devices in the courthouse and in the courtroom.

A. In the Courthouse:

Portable Electronic Devices are allowed in the courthouse subject to security screening, including courthouse screening devices, and the following rules:

- 1. All Portable Electronic Devices must be placed in **silent mode** at all times within the courthouse. **Additionally, Portable Electronic Devices shall not be used in any manner that emits audible sound, including but not limited to speakerphone conversations, playing music, videos, games, alarms, alerts or other audio unless expressly authorized by the Court. All**

telephone conversations shall be conducted without the use of speakerphone and only in designated areas where such conversations do not disrupt court operations, compromise security, or interfere with the administration of justice.

2. Court visitors may possess a Portable Electronic Device in the courthouse and courtrooms without prior authorization of the Court. However, all visitors shall be required to place said device into a secured pouch upon entering the courthouse. The pouch will be locked by the Sheriff. The pouch contains signal blocking technology such that the pouched device will not receive any calls, texts, or other outside communication while in the pouch.

The visitor's pouch will be unlocked at the courthouse exit, as the visitor is exiting the courthouse.

3. Portable Electronic Devices shall not be used in any manner that threatens, intimidates, harasses, identifies, or compromises the safety, privacy, or security of jurors, witnesses, victims, protected parties, court personnel, law-enforcement personnel, or other courthouse visitors.
4. Other Electronic Devices: Cameras, video cameras, video recording equipment, recording devices, smart glasses, recording glasses, camera-equipped eyewear, and similar devices ("other electronic devices") not classified as Portable Electronic Devices are not allowed in the courthouse unless authorized by a judge of the Circuit or District Courts.
5. There shall not be any type of taping, filming or recording any interior portion of the courthouse building unless otherwise specifically authorized by the Court.

B. In the Courtroom:

Portable Electronic Devices shall not be used while a court visitor is in a courtroom except with the express permission of the presiding judge. Visitors to the court who need to use a portable electronic device to present evidence shall notify the courtroom deputy and presiding judge. A courtroom deputy will be able to unlock the pouch when the case is called. If the use of Portable Electronic Devices in the courtroom is authorized, they must remain silent at all times. They shall only be used for the purposes and in the manner authorized by the presiding judge. Photography, video recording, audio recording, or video transmission or

communication of any information using any media from inside the courtroom is prohibited without prior written authorization of the presiding judge.

C. Confiscation of Portable Electronic Device; Ejection of User; and Punishment

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

Any Portable Electronic Device used in violation of this, or any other court order or policy may be confiscated, and the court or Sheriff's Department responsible for providing court security shall not be liable for any damage to or loss of a confiscated device.

Any use of a portable electronic device in the courthouse or courtrooms to take photographs, make audio or video recordings, or transmit live video or video streaming shall be prohibited except with prior written authorization by a judge of the Circuit or District Courts.

D. Further Limitations by Judges

A judge may further limit use of any Portable Electronic Device:

- (1) Pursuant to Virginia Code § 19.2-266 (to regulate media coverage of judicial proceedings);
- (2) If use of the Portable Electronic Device may or does interfere with the administration of justice or cause any threat to safety or security; or
- (3) For any other conditions as needed to maintain safety, security, proper behavior, order, and the administration of justice;
- (4) Nothing in this policy limits the authority of the presiding judge to regulate the admission, use, or display of evidence. This section is intended to ensure compliance with statutory requirements regarding access to evidence stored on portable electronic devices.

IV. Posting Notice of this Policy

The policy of this court shall be posted in an accessible, prominent, and conspicuous manner at the entrance of the courthouse and on (i) the individual circuit and district courts pages on the Virginia Judicial System website or equivalent website where statewide courthouse information is aggregated; (ii) a court's individual website; or (iii)

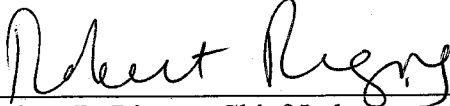
if the court does not have an individual website, an equivalent local government website where such circuit court's information is communicated to the public.

V. **Effective Date of this Policy**

Until such time as funds are expended to purchase equipment necessary to comply with this policy, the Sheriff, as the chief security officer for the courthouse, may continue to enforce the Circuit Court's policy governing portable electronic devices in the courthouse. However, there shall be no policy that prohibits a visitor to the courthouse from bringing a portable electronic device into the courthouse for the purpose of presenting evidence that is contained on the electronic device.

It is so ORDERED.

Entered this 1st day of July, 2026



Robert B. Rigney, Chief Judge