VIRGINIA: IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE CITY OF WINCHESTER AND COUNTY OF FREDERICK

JOINT JUDICIAL CENTER ORDER REGARDING PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN COURTHOUSE

It appearing to the Court that pursuant to Virginia Statutes §§ 16.1-69.35:4 and 17.1-128.2 the Court is mandated to establish a policy regarding possession and use of portable electronic devices in the District Courts and Circuit Courts within the Joint Judicial Center. Therefore, the Court ORDERS that:

1) **As to the Public Areas and Clerk's Offices (excluding the courtrooms) of the Joint Judicial Center**, all members of the general public may possess and use portable electronic devices as of July 1, 2026, in the courthouse. Such devices will be placed on silent mode, and shall not make any noises within the courthouse. **Furthermore, using a portable electronic device in these areas to take photographs, make audio or video recordings, or transmit live audio or video streaming is prohibited**. The only exception is if a Clerk of their respective clerk's office specifically authorizes this conduct within their office.

2) **As to all Courtrooms within the Joint Judicial Center**, no person shall use any portable electronic device in the courtrooms, as of July 1, 2026, except the following persons:

   a. Law enforcement officers, including probation and parole officers, and who displays his or her credentials on request, and in the performance of their duties;
   b. Attorneys and their staff members. Staff members include licensed private investigators who are present at all times with the attorney(s) employing the investigator on a retained or appointed basis;
   c. The Clerk and his or her staff members;
   d. Judges, including retired judges, and their staff members;
   e. Court Reporters in the performance of their duties;
   f. Employees and elected officials of a local, state, or federal government and their agents in the performance of their duties;
   g. Maintenance persons, delivery persons, and vendors in the performance of their duties, as approved by Court Security;
   h. Persons required to wear an electronic monitoring device by a court of competent jurisdiction;
   i. Marriage officiants in the performance of their duties and marriage celebrants approved by Court Security;
   j. Such other individuals, parties, and members of the media permitted to do so with the express authorization of the presiding judge in that courtroom. This includes self-represented litigants that need to use an electronic device for trial or hearing purposes approved by a judge. Any person so permitted to use personal electronic devices in the courtrooms shall place the device on silent mode.

FURTHERMORE, no person except a duly sworn court reporter or a Court Security member acting in the performance of his or her duties shall use a portable electronic device or other device to take photographs, make audio or video recordings, or transmit live audio or video streaming in THE COURTROOMS, except with prior written or oral authorization by the presiding judge in that courtroom.

3) Any person using or possessing a portable electronic device in violation of this Order may be removed from the courthouse, found in contempt of court, and is 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 days of incarceration. Punishment of plenary contempt is punishable by confinement in jail for not more than twelve months and a fine of up to $2500.00, either or both. In addition, any portable electronic device used in violation of this or any other court order or policy may be confiscated, and the Sheriff shall not be responsible or liable for any damage to or loss of a confiscated device.

4) A portable electronic device includes, but is not limited to any phone, smart phone, cell phone, recording device, computer, laptop computer, electronic calendar, tablet, camera, transmitter, smartwatch or radio. **All portable electronic devices and other devices are subject to security screening upon entry to the courthouse as the Sheriff may so require.**

5) This Order supersedes and replaces all previous orders concerning portable electronic devices.

Pursuant to the statutes, the Clerks shall post this Order setting forth the portable electronic policy in an accessible, prominent, and conspicuous manner at the entrance to the Joint Judicial Center, and on the individual District and Circuit Courts page on the Virginia Judicial System website or equivalent website where statewide courthouse information is aggregated.

Entered this 1st day of July, 2026.

William W. Eldridge IV, Chief Judge
Frederick/Winchester Circuit Court

Alexander R. Iden, Presiding Judge
Frederick/Winchester Circuit Court

Christopher E. Collins, Presiding Judge
Frederick/Winchester Circuit Court