VIRGINIA: IN THE TWENTY-SEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

ORDER AND POLICY FOR THE USE OF PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN COURTHOUSES AND COURTROOMS	)	**CM26**

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2026. Pursuant to Virginia Code **§ 16.1-69.35:4** and **§ 17.1-128.2**, and upon consideration of competing interests of promoting access to justice and maintaining security, safety, and order in courthouses and courtrooms, the Court sets forth the following policy in regard to the use of Portable Electronic Devices in courthouses and courtrooms:

DEFINITION OF "PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICE"

The term "Portable Electronic Device" is defined to include (i) personal laptops, (ii) tablets, (iii) mobile telephones, including cell phones and any telephone with a camera, audio and video recording capabilities, and transmission capabilities; (iv) electronic calendars; (v) electronic book readers; (vi) "smart" watches; or (vii) any other electronic personal communication device. "Portable Electronic Devices" does not include a camera, video camera, video or audio recording equipment, or a recording device that is not otherwise a component of a Portable Electronic Device.

DEFINITION OF "VISITOR TO THE COURT"

"Visitor to the court" means a member of the public who is not an active or retired judge, a magistrate, an attorney-at-law who possesses and presents a valid state bar identification card, a law-enforcement officer as defined in Virginia Code § 9.1-101 or court security officer, a probation officer who possesses and presents proper credentials and who is at the courthouse in the conduct of his official duties, a state or local agency employee who possesses and presents proper credentials and who is at the courthouse in the conduct of his official duties, a court reporter during the course of his official duties within the courthouse, and any other individual who has been authorized to possess a portable electronic device in the court upon a determination by the Sheriff of the city or county in which the court sits that such individual's possession of a portable electronic device does not pose a security risk or threat and that access to such portable electronic device is necessary for conducting such individual's work or business in the court.

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(s).

A. IN THE COURTHOUSE:

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

(i) Court visitors may use Portable Electronic Devices in the common areas of the courthouse, such as lobbies and hallways. Further restrictions, including restricting mobile telephone conversations to designated areas, may be imposed as needed to maintain safety, security, proper behavior, order, and the administration of justice. All Portable Electronic Devices must be placed in a silent mode, such as vibrate, at all times within the courthouse.

(ii) Using Portable Electronic Devices in the courthouse or courtrooms to take photographs, make audio or video recordings, or to transmit live audio or video streaming is prohibited, except with prior written authorization by a judge of the Circuit or District Court.

(iii) Other Electronic Devices: Cameras, video cameras, video recording equipment and recording devices ("other electronic devices") not classified as Portable Electronic Devices are not allowed in the courthouse except for use at events such as investitures, ceremonies, and weddings. Other electronic devices may be allowed in the courthouse with prior written authorization by a judge of the Circuit or District Court.

B. IN THE COURTROOMS:

Portable Electronic Devices shall not be brought into or used in the courtroom without authorization from the presiding judge. A presiding judge may authorize the possession and use of Portable Electronic Devices in the courtroom and may impose restrictions on such possession and use. If the possession 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. A visitor to the court may, with the express permission of the presiding judge, use a Portable Electronic Device to (i) present evidence or other information or (ii) conduct research related to the proceeding.

C. CONFISCATION OF EQUIPMENT AND EJECTION OF USER:

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 Devices 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.

D. FURTHER LIMITATIONS BY JUDGES:

A judge may further limit or ban the possession or use of any Portable Electronic Devices:

(i) pursuant to Virginia Code § 19.2-266 (to regulate media coverage of judicial proceedings);
(ii) if possession or use of the Portable Electronic Device may or does interfere with the administration of justice or cause any threat to safety or security; or
(iii) for any other reason.

POSTING NOTICE OF THIS POLICY

The policy of each court regarding the possession and use of Portable Electronic Devices shall be posted on the court's home page on the Virginia Judicial System website; on the court's local website (if any); at the courthouse entrance; and, in the Clerk's Office.

STORAGE OF PORTABLE ELECTRONIC DEVICES:

If the possession of Portable Electronic Devices in the courtroom is prohibited or restricted, then storage for the devices shall be provided at the security entrance to the courthouse for anyone who is not allowed to bring their devices into the courtroom. Storage locker units are recommended as the means for storing the devices. Other forms of on-site storage may be provided. Storage of devices may be limited to persons who represent to security personnel that they have no other means of storage available to them, such as a vehicle parked on or near the courthouse premises.

Enter this ORDER this 26th day of June 2026.

SIGNATURE REDACTED PURSUANT TO VIRGINIA CODE § 17.1-293 (B) SEE CLERK'S OFFICE FOR ORIGINAL SIGNATURE

K. Mike Fleenor, Jr., Chief Judge
through June 30, 2026

SIGNATURE REDACTED PURSUANT TO VIRGINIA CODE § 17.1-293 (B) SEE CLERK'S OFFICE FOR ORIGINAL SIGNATURE

Robert M. D. Turk, Chief Judge
beginning July 1, 2026