

FILED IN OPEN COURT

This 13th day of December 20 24
ELISABETH A. FRENCH B.B.
PRESIDING CIRCUIT JUDGE

STATE OF ALABAMA)
JEFFERSON COUNTY)

TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF ALABAMA
ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO.: AO-2024-42

Whereas, on June 9, 2020, the Supreme Court of Alabama adopted and approved the Circuit Criminal Division Media Coverage Plan of the Tenth Judicial Circuit. That plan requires that any person desiring to broadcast, record or photograph Court proceedings must make a timely written request and otherwise strictly comply with the provisions of the Media Plan.

Whereas, the Court has been made aware of repeated and increasingly frequent acts in violation of the Media Plan by individuals taking unauthorized photographs, publishing photographs on social media and otherwise attempting to interfere with Court operations thereby presenting a danger to crime victims, criminal defendants, witnesses and Court personnel.

I. Cell phones prohibited in Criminal Justice Center

Therefore, effective January 6, 2025, except as stated herein, the taking of photographs, filming, recording audio or video, or the possession or use of a portable electronic device as defined herein, shall be prohibited in the Mel Bailey Criminal Justice Center ("CJC" located at 801 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd. N., Birmingham, Alabama 35203). Portable electronic devices shall include, but not be limited to cell phones, computer tablets, any device capable of taking still or actual photographs; any device capable of filming or recording audio or video; and any device capable of transmitting an audio phone conversation, audio communication, text message, email, message over a digital application, or information by any other means.

Taking photographs, filming, taking video, and/or taking audio recordings in the CJC or the possession of a Portable Electronic Device is forbidden, will be considered a violation of both this Administrative Order, and Ala. Code § 13A-10-130 (interfering with judicial proceedings), and may subject the offender to temporary forfeiture of the device, removal from the Courthouse, arrest, criminal contempt proceedings, and/or fines and penalties provided by law.

This Administrative Order, as it pertains to taking photographs, filming, taking video, and taking audio recordings, may be waived in limited circumstances by the Presiding Judge of the Circuit.

As it pertains to the possession of a Portable Electronic Device, this Order does not apply to the following:

Court Personnel (defined as anyone employed within the Courthouse), Licensed Attorneys and their staff, Law Enforcement and Corrections Officers, State Probation Officers, CRO and Community Corrections Officers, Department of Forensic Sciences employees, the Jefferson County District Attorney and his Attorneys and staff, the Jefferson County Public Defender and his Attorneys and staff, Expert Witnesses called to testify, persons summoned to serve on jury duty or otherwise serving as Jurors or Grand Jurors, credentialed television and radio personnel, Jefferson County personnel, municipal personnel, medical necessities and anyone else authorized by the Presiding Judge of the Circuit or, on a temporary basis, by the Judge presiding over that person's proceeding. However, individuals covered by these exceptions are still prohibited by law from taking photographs, filming, taking video and/or taking audio. These exempt individuals are not permitted to carry another individual's device into the courthouse. Failure to comply with this Order may result in revocation of cell phone possession privileges, criminal charges and/or fines.

Court security personnel are hereby instructed to direct all other individuals to refrain from proceeding past the security checkpoint and to return any portable electronic device to his or her vehicle. In the event that no vehicle is available for storage of the portable electronic device, court security personnel may place the portable electronic device in court designated secured packaging designed to prevent use of the device. The device shall remain in possession of the owner until the owner exits the building, at which time the secured packaging will be unlocked and disabled. Any tampering, damage, and/or theft of the packaging shall be considered a violation of this Order, Ala. Code § 13A-10-130, and may be subject the offender to removal from the courthouse, arrest, criminal contempt proceeding, fines and/or penalties provided by law.

The provisions of the Circuit Criminal Division Media Coverage Plan remain in full force and effect. Television and radio outlets may broadcast, record or photograph official Court proceedings when in full compliance with the Media Plan.

II. Main Courthouse and Domestic Relations

In addition to the Main Courthouse located at 716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd N., Birmingham, Alabama 35203, the Civil Media Plan adopted on April 15, 2020, remains in full force and effect, and is hereby made applicable to the Jefferson County Domestic Relations Court (2124 7th Avenue North, Birmingham, Alabama 35203). Violators of the Civil Media Plan, whether or not associated with a media outlet, are subject to temporary forfeiture of the device, removal from the courthouse, arrest, and/or contempt proceedings and prosecution under Ala. Code § 13A-10-130.

DONE and ORDERED this the 13th day of December 2024.



ELISABETH A. FRENCH
JEFFERSON COUNTY PRESIDING JUDGE

Via Email Distribution:

Honorable Tom Parker, Chief Justice

Dr. Rich Hobson, Administrative Director of Courts

Tenth Judicial Circuit Judges

Tenth Judicial District Judges

Jacqueline Anderson Smith, Circuit Clerk, Tenth Judicial Circuit

Karen Dunn Burks, Circuit Clerk, Bessemer Division

Kaitlyn Puzzitiello, Court Administrator

Jim Wilson, Birmingham Bar Association