

366th District Court

Honorable Tom Nowak
Judge Presiding

Russell A. Steindam Courts Building
2100 Bloomdale Road, Suite 30146
McKinney, TX 75071

972-548-4570

366@co.collin.tx.us

COURTROOM DECORUM ORDER

In the exercise of its inherent power to provide for the orderly disposition of all pretrial and trial proceedings taking place in the 366th District Court, ORDERS, as follows:

I. COURTROOM DEMEANOR FOR ALL CASES

- a. In all cases, the atmosphere in the courtroom must be quiet, calm, and deliberative. Evidence in a case may be complex, graphic, emotional, and sometimes very tedious. All persons attending proceedings must be willing to commit to a serious attitude.
- b. Persons in the courtroom must remain silent during all proceedings. There will be no talking, whispering, shaking of heads, gestures, or any other signals or signs of approval or disapproval of the proceedings.
- c. Persons may not cause distractions with devices, books, papers, or other materials during the court proceedings in the courtroom. Devices must be silenced in the courtroom. No one may make voice calls in the courtroom. A person who does not silence his/her device and causes a courtroom distraction is also subject to an immediate \$50 fine for direct contempt.
- d. No one may photograph, record audio, or record video in the 366th District Court, except as specifically permitted by this order. No television, cell phone, personal video or still cameras are allowed in the courtroom except as permitted by request and written order from the Court.
- e. Children not mature enough to maintain decorum are not permitted in the courtroom.
- f. There will be no drinks, snacks, or chewing gum in courtroom, except for bottled water.

- g. Persons in the courtroom must be dressed in appropriate courtroom attire. This means the best business attire at your disposal. Gentlemen should, if available, wear dress-collared shirts, ties, slacks, and suit jackets. Ladies should, if available, wear business suits.
- h. No signs, banners, company or media logos, messages, clothing with messages, or other distracting, disruptive, or potentially improperly prejudicial material may be brought into, worn, or displayed in the courtroom.
- i. Any attempt by anyone to communicate with or influence a member of the jury panel, juror, or alternate, before the return of a final judgment in the trial may be punished as a criminal cause of action and as criminal contempt of court and such other sanctions as deemed by the judge to be necessary for the due and proper administration of justice.

II. GALLERY SEATING FOR HIGH INTEREST CASES

- a. These gallery seating orders apply to all high-interest proceedings except jury selection, due to severe space limitations. Very limited gallery seating may be provided during jury selection, depending on the size of the panel.
- b. Seats in the left (as you walk in) gallery of the courtroom will be assigned to the media during proceedings. These seats will be available on a first come, first served basis each day. The court may specify the placement of media personnel and equipment to permit reasonable coverage without disruption to the proceedings.
- c. Seats in the right (as you walk in) gallery of the courtroom will be assigned to the general public during proceedings. These seats will be available on a first come, first served basis each day.
- d. The first row of the gallery is reserved for attorneys, staff, witnesses, and other participants.
- e. Seats in the gallery of the courtroom may be reserved for court use as needed to enforce the orders of the court and to ensure the due and proper administration of justice and security in this case.
- f. Any seat in the media or public sections not filled by the court's first recess will be filled with waiting media or members of the public on a first come, first served basis each day.
- g. All spectators, including media, public, and family, must be seated before court is in session and must remain in the courtroom (except for emergencies) until the next recess is called. No spectators will be admitted

while court is in session. Any person may leave anytime, but will only be readmitted after the next recess.

- h. The courtroom will be cleared: (i) of media until thirty minutes before court is scheduled to begin, (ii) of the public until fifteen minutes before court is scheduled to begin, (iii) for the duration of the luncheon recess, and (iv) no later than thirty minutes after adjournment. An exception to this rule may occur if the court reporter needs additional time to exhibit evidence to the media after the end of the day recess, or if prior permission of the judge is obtained for media setup.

III. PHOTOGRAPHY AND RECORDING

In an effort to protect the privacy of those individuals appearing before the court, to maintain one official court record, ensure the safety of individuals, and prevent distractions, recording and photography of individuals with matters before the 366th District Court is prohibited without prior approval of the Court. This prohibition extends to all persons in the courtrooms, hallways, and common areas of the courthouse past the security checkpoint.

- a. Requestors who have given the court 2 business days' advance notice of intent to film, record, or photograph the proceedings ("Approved Filmers") may capture video, audio, or photographs inside the courtroom once approved by the court. Notice should be emailed to 366@co.collin.tx.us.
- b. One television camera will be permitted in the courtroom with a tri-pod and operator. A monitor must be set up so that the court can simultaneously view the video coverage. One additional still camera and photographer will be permitted in the courtroom. Media may make pool arrangements and designate a pool coordinator to interact with the court.
- c. Any equipment permitted by this order must be set up prior to the hearing time or it will not be allowed. No equipment shall be placed in or removed from the courtroom while court is in session. No equipment may be placed in a way that presents a safety hazard as determined by the bailiff or judge. Media equipment and personnel shall remain in their designated locations at all times when court is in session.
- d. At no time will a potential juror, juror, or alternate be photographed. Once a final judgment has been entered in the trial, then a potential juror, juror, or alternate may voluntarily consent to his/her photographing outside of the secure area.
- e. At no time will a minor witness or an accompanying minor of those in the courtroom be photographed.

- f. No visual recording or photographing of court employees is permitted in the courtroom without prior approval. This includes the judge, bailiff, sheriff's deputies, court reporter, court coordinator, and others.
- g. No audio recording is permitted of conferences involving counsel at the respective counsel tables or bench conferences with the judge. No visual recording of the lips, so as to be readable by a lip reader, of conferences involving counsel at the respective counsel tables or bench conferences with the judge is permitted.
- h. Only equipment that does not produce distracting sound or light may be used to cover the proceedings. Artificial lighting may not be used. The court may require media personnel to demonstrate that proposed equipment complies with these rules.
- i. No interviews are permitted in the courtrooms, hallways, or secure areas of the courthouse at any time. Interviews may be conducted in the lobby of the courthouse outside the secure area.
- j. Limine Order – Attorneys shall not discuss the cameras or media coverage in the presence of the jury.
- k. Photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings made during court proceedings are not part of the official court record.

IV. INNER SECTION OF THE COURTROOM (IN FRONT OF THE BAR)

No member of the media, family, students, or public is allowed beyond the bar (the partition separating the gallery from the inner section of the courtroom) at any time, with the exception of those persons listed in Section IV(b) below. Persons sitting in front of the bar are to be lawyers, lawyers' staff, witnesses called to the witness stand, court employees, jurors, and other trial participants.

With court approval, Approved Filmers may set up in the jury box for non-jury proceedings. Approved Filmers may be in the inner section of the courtroom only when supervised by the bailiff or court coordinator.

V. SANCTIONS

There are no warnings. Any violation of this or any other court orders, and any conduct the judge finds disruptive of the proceedings may result in:

- a. An order of temporary or permanent exclusion of the offender from the courtroom and security areas,
- b. An order of temporary or permanent exclusion of the media organization represented by the offender from the courtroom and security areas,

- c. Contempt of court sanctions, punishable by confinement in the Collin County jail for up to 6 months and a fine not to exceed \$500, for each offense, and
- d. Such other sanctions as deemed necessary by the judge to ensure the due and proper administration of justice.

VI. NOTICE OF THIS ORDER

Notice of this order shall be given by its posting online at the 366th District Court website maintained by Collin County and by posting outside of the 366th District Court.

SIGNED on _____.

JUDGE TOM NOWAK

Presiding Judge 366th District Court