

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE TENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR HARDEE, HIGHLANDS AND POLK COUNTIES, FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO. 1-19.1

RE: PROCEDURES FOR SPECIAL INTEREST/HIGH PROFILE PROCEEDINGS

WHEREAS, the Florida Supreme Court has said that "a trial court has the inherent power to control the conduct of the proceedings before it, and it is the trial court's responsibility to protect a defendant in a criminal prosecution from inherently prejudicial influences which threaten fairness of the trial and the abrogation of... constitutional rights," State ex rel. Miami Herald Publishing Company v. McIntosh, 340 So 2d. 904, 909 (Fla. 1976); and

WHEREAS, the Florida Supreme Court has promulgated rules entitled "Standards of Conduct and Technology Governing Electronic Media and Still Photography of Judicial Proceedings; and

WHEREAS, special interest/high visibility proceedings require procedures and special accommodations to ensure full access without compromising the right of any litigant to a fair and orderly trial;

And in accordance with the authority vested in the Chief Judge by rule 2.450 of the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, it is ORDERED THAT:

1. When the trial judge invokes this order or any portion hereof, the Court Administrator's Office, in conjunction with the Polk, Highlands or Hardee Sheriff's Office, is authorized to develop a detailed plan to achieve the goals of the order. Copies of the plan, excluding provisions relating to security, shall be available to the press and the public.
2. The court administrator shall designate a member of the court administrative staff to serve as the court's media coordinator/information officer. This person shall serve as the liaison between the court and the media. As information officer, this person shall be available to the media to answer questions regarding the proceedings while court is in session. Additionally, this person shall issue press credentials to members of the media who present a photo-identification card or other satisfactory proof that they are bona fide members of the media.

Any representative of the media wishing to cover a proceeding under this order must obtain and display a media pass from the Court Administrator's Office prior to admittance to any courtroom.

3. It is recommended that members of the media obtain and display the media credentials from the court's Media Coordinator for all cases and/or activities within the courthouse.

4. The court's Media Coordinator, upon proper notification, shall convene a meeting of interested media representatives and representatives of the Polk, Highlands or Hardee Sheriff's Office for the purpose of establishing a Media Committee.

5. The Media Committee, consisting of at least one representative from the video, audio and print media, shall designate (a) the pool video camera person for coverage inside the courtroom, (b) the pool still photographer for inside the courtroom, (c) the pool video camera person for coverage outside the courtroom, and (d) the pool still photographer for coverage outside the courtroom. Additionally, if necessary, the Media Committee shall allocate, on an equitable basis and from among those holding court-issued press credentials, courtroom seating assignments in an area reserved for media representatives.

6. If space is available within a close proximity to a special interest/high visibility proceeding, the court administrator shall designate an area to serve as a media center. This facility, under the supervision of the court's media coordinator, will be open during normal working hours to media representatives with court issued press credentials. The center will accommodate monitors and other equipment provided by media representatives who are unable to obtain seating in the courtroom.

Courtroom Admittance

In order to insure the preservation of decorum and integrity of the judicial process, and to accommodate the parties, media, and the general public during the litigation of the case, the court hereby establishes the following courtroom procedures:

1. The trial judge will determine whether cameras will be permitted in the courtroom or whether they will be excluded pursuant to Rule 2.450 of the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration. The trial judge shall designate a specified location in the courtroom for the television camera person and the still photographer(s). These persons shall comply strictly with the Supreme Court's Standards of Conduct and Technology Covering Electronic Media and Still Photography Coverage of Judicial Proceedings. The court may require pooling of the resources.

2. If electronic media are admitted, the trial judge shall designate a specified location outside the courtroom for the pool television camera and the pool still photographer. Unless otherwise allowed by the trial judge or the Chief Judge, no other television cameras, still cameras, or other broadcasting or recording equipment will be permitted in the courthouse with the exception of (a) media covering other judicial proceedings, and (b) equipment located in the media center, and (c) the general public areas of the courthouse.

3. The trial judge shall designate a specified number of seats in the public area of the courtroom for the following categories of individuals, (a) parties' and victim's family and friends and court personnel; (b) media representatives, and (c) general public. Categories "a" and "c" will be regulated by the trial courts' bailiff; category "b" will be regulated by the Media Committee.

4. No pass-bearing person will be allowed to enter the courtroom once the judge has assumed the bench.

5. There will be no interviews conducted within or immediately outside the courtroom, or in any other place that might interfere with the administration of justice in this or other proceedings.

Other Needs

1. By arrangements with the court's media coordinator, the courtroom will be made available to the media before the proceeding for installation of necessary equipment and cable.

2. All cables must be located so as not to constitute a safety hazard or an obstruction to pedestrian traffic.

3. Satellite trucks must be parked in an area designated by the local City Police or local Sheriff's Office.

Administrative Order No. 1-19.0, entered August 11, 1994, is hereby SUPERCEDED.

DONE on this 16th day of April 2008.

J. DAVID LANGFORD

Chief Judge