

IN THE  
SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS

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In re: Extended Media Coverage In the  
Circuit Courts of Illinois on an  
Experimental Basis

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M.R. 2634

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ORDER

Effective immediately and until further order, pursuant to the Court's general administrative and supervisory authority over all courts, the Supreme Court of Illinois authorizes extended media coverage in the circuit courts of Illinois on an experimental, circuit by circuit basis. Therefore, IT IS ORDERED:

Extended media coverage in the circuit courts of Illinois is authorized on an experimental, circuit by circuit basis pursuant to the "Policy for Extended Media Coverage in the Circuit Courts of Illinois", attached hereto and approved by the Court this date. The chief judge of a judicial circuit may make application to the Court for approval to provide extended media coverage of judicial proceedings in the chief judge's judicial circuit. The application shall be forwarded to the attention of the Clerk of the Supreme Court. In the event this order creates a conflict with any statute or Supreme Court Rule, this order shall control during its effective period.

The "Policy for Extended Media Coverage in the Circuit Courts of Illinois" is effective immediately.

Order entered by the Court.

**FILED**

JAN 24 2012

SUPREME COURT  
CLERK

# **POLICY FOR EXTENDED MEDIA COVERAGE IN THE CIRCUIT COURTS OF ILLINOIS**

## **1.0 Media Access**

Upon application and approval by the Supreme Court of Illinois, a judicial circuit of the circuit courts of Illinois may allow extended media coverage of public judicial proceedings on an experimental basis in accordance with the provisions of this policy. The coverage shall be subject, at all times, to the authority of the judge presiding at the proceeding. Extended media coverage shall not be distracting or interfere with the solemnity, decorum and dignity of the court making decisions that affect the life, liberty or property of citizens. Nothing in this policy shall limit or restrict the power, authority or responsibility otherwise vested in the chief judge of the circuit; and the judge presiding to: a) control the conduct of any proceeding; b) maintain decorum and prevent distractions; c) guarantee the safety of the courtroom, including any party, witness, or juror and d) ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice in the pending cause.

## **1.1 Definitions**

- (a) "Extended media coverage" means any media recording or broadcasting of proceedings by the use of television, radio, photographic, or recording equipment for the purpose of gathering and disseminating news to the public.
- (b) "News Media", in general, means established news gathering and reporting agencies and their representatives whose function is to inform the public.
- (c) "Judge" means the circuit or associate judge presiding in a trial court proceeding.
- (d) "Chief Judge" means the chief judge of the circuit.
- (e) "Judicial proceedings" or "proceedings" includes all public trials, hearings or other proceedings of a trial court when extended media coverage is requested, except those specifically excluded by these provisions.
- (f) "Media coordinator" means a member of the news media who has requested extended coverage or, in the case of more than one media person requesting extended coverage, a representative chosen by all of the media requesting extended coverage and approved by the judge. The media coordinator shall work with the chief judge and the judge, or with their designee, in a court proceeding with extended coverage.

## 1.2 General

Broadcasting, televising, recording and photographing may be permitted in the courtroom during sessions of the court, under the following conditions:

- (a) Permission first shall have been granted by the judge, who may prescribe such conditions of coverage as provided for in this policy. The chief judge shall have discretion to deny all extended media coverage.
- (b) In prosecutions for sexual abuse, or when sexual abuse is an essential element, there shall be no extended media coverage of the testimony of a victim unless the testifying victim consents. Further, an objection to coverage by a testifying victim in any other forcible felony prosecution, and by police informants, undercover agent(s), and relocated witnesses shall be presumed valid. The judge shall exercise broad discretion in deciding whether there is cause for prohibition. This list is not exclusive. The judge may find cause in comparable situations.
- (c) Extended media coverage is prohibited in any court proceeding required under Illinois law to be held in private. No coverage shall be permitted in any juvenile, dissolution, adoption, child custody, evidence suppression or trade secret cases.
- (d) Extended media coverage of jury selection is prohibited. Extended media coverage of the jury and individual jurors is prohibited.
- (e) There shall be no audio pickup or broadcast or recording of a conference in a court proceeding or in a court facility between attorneys and their clients, between co-counsel, between attorneys and opposing counsel, or attorneys and the judge.
- (f) Audio or visual equipment authorized by these provisions shall not be operated during a recess in the court proceeding.
- (g) The quantity and types of equipment permitted in the courtroom shall be subject to the discretion of the judge within the guidelines set out in this policy.
- (h) Upon application of the media, the judge may permit the use of equipment or techniques at variance with the provisions in this policy, provided the variance request is included in the advance notice of coverage provided for in subsection 1.3(b). Objections, if any, shall be made as provided in subsection 1.3(c). Ruling upon a variance application shall be at the sole discretion of the judge. Variances may be allowed by the judge without advance application or notice if all counsel and parties consent to it.

- (i) The judge may refuse, limit, amend or terminate photographic or electronic media coverage at any time during the proceedings in the event the judge finds that provisions established under this policy, or additional rules imposed by the judge, have been violated, or that substantial rights of individual participants or rights to a fair trial will be prejudiced by the manner of coverage if it is allowed to continue; or if it is necessary to guarantee the safety of the courtroom, including any party, witness, juror or attendee of the proceeding.
- (j) The rights of extended media coverage may be exercised only by the news media.
- (k) A decision by a judge to deny, limit or terminate extended media coverage is not appealable.
- (l) A judge may authorize extended media coverage of ceremonial proceedings at variance with provisions in this policy as the judge sees fit.

### **1.3 Procedural**

- (a) **Media Coordinator.** The judge, or the court's designee, and all interested members of the media shall work, whenever possible, with and through an appropriate media coordinator on all arrangements for extended media coverage. In the event a media coordinator is not available for a particular proceeding, the judge may deny extended media coverage or may appoint an individual from among local working representatives of the media to serve as the coordinator for the media in the proceeding.
- (b) **Advance Notice of Coverage.**
  - 1. All requests for extended media coverage shall be made through the media coordinator. The media coordinator shall inform the judge at least 14 days in advance of the time the proceeding is scheduled to begin, but these times may be extended or reduced by court order. When the proceeding is not scheduled at least 14 days in advance, however, the media coordinator shall give notice of the request as soon as practicable after the proceeding is scheduled. Upon receipt of notice, the judge shall inform the chief judge.
  - 2. Notice of the request shall be in writing, filed in the office of the clerk of the circuit clerk. A copy of the notice shall be provided by the media coordinator to all counsel of record, parties appearing without counsel, the appropriate court administrator and the judge expected to preside. The notice shall contain:

A. The title and docket number of the case, and the date and time, if available, of the proceeding;

B. The type of extended media coverage requested with a description (e.g. the number of television cameras, still photographers).

C. A statement that appropriate notice is being provided to all counsel of record, parties appearing without counsel, the trial court administrator and the judge, along with the names of each.

D. The name, address and telephone number of the media coordinator making the request, and the media coordinator's employer.

3. Failure to provide notice to all counsel of record and to parties appearing without counsel may result in denial of the request for extended media coverage.

(c) Objections.

A party objecting to expanded media coverage shall file a written objection, stating the reasons, at least three (3) days before commencement of the proceeding. All witnesses shall be advised by counsel proposing to introduce their testimony of their right to object to extended media coverage, and all objections by witnesses shall be filed prior to the commencement of the proceeding. Witnesses shall be entitled to the assistance of the clerk of the circuit court in providing copies of this objection to all counsel of record, parties appearing without counsel, the media coordinator and the judge. All objections shall be heard and determined by the judge prior to the commencement of the proceedings. The judge may rule on the basis of the written objection alone. In addition, the objecting party or witness, and all other parties, may be afforded an opportunity to present additional evidence by affidavit or by other means as the judge directs. The judge may permit presentation of evidence by the media coordinator in the same manner. Time for filing of objections may be extended or reduced at the discretion of the judge, who also, in appropriate circumstances, may extend the right of objection to persons not specifically provided for in this policy.

## 1.4 Technical

- (a) Equipment specifications. Equipment to be used in courtrooms during judicial proceedings must be unobtrusive and must not produce distracting sound. In addition, equipment must satisfy the following criteria, where applicable:
1. Still cameras. Still cameras and lenses must be unobtrusive without distracting light or sound.
  2. Television cameras and related equipment. Television cameras, together with any related equipment to be located in the courtroom, must be unobtrusive in both size and appearance, without distracting sound or light.
  3. Audio equipment. Microphones, wiring and audio recording equipment shall be unobtrusive and shall be of adequate technical quality to prevent interference with the covered judicial proceedings. Any changes in existing audio systems must be approved by the presiding judge. No modifications of existing systems shall be made at public expense. Microphones for use of counsel and judges shall be equipped with power switches to facilitate compliance with subsections 1.2(e) and (f) of this policy.
  4. No light or signal visible or audible to participants in the proceeding shall be used on any equipment during extended coverage to indicate whether it is operating.
  5. Advance approval. It shall be the duty of media personnel to demonstrate to the judge reasonably in advance of the proceeding that the equipment sought to be used meets the criteria set forth in this section. Failure to obtain advance judicial approval for equipment may preclude its use in the proceeding. All media equipment and personnel shall be in place at least fifteen minutes prior to the scheduled time of commencement of the proceeding.
- (b) Lighting. Other than light sources already existing in the courtroom, no flashbulbs or other artificial light device of any kind shall be employed in the courtroom. With the approval of the judge, however, modifications may be made in light sources existing in the courtroom (e.g., higher wattage light bulbs), provided modifications are installed and maintained without public expense.
- (c) Pooling and Equipment. The following limitations on the number of photographic and broadcast media personnel in the courtroom and the amount of equipment shall apply:

1. Pooling. The media are encouraged to pool equipment and personnel. Where the limitations on equipment and personnel under these provisions make it necessary, the media shall be required to pool equipment and personnel. Pooling arrangements shall be the sole responsibility of the media coordinator. No judicial officer or court personnel shall mediate disputes. Priority consideration shall be extended to one of the two television cameras to televise an entire proceeding from beginning to end. In the absence of agreement or in the event of unresolved disputes relating to pooling arrangements, the kind of extended coverage sought shall be prohibited and excluded from the proceeding.
  2. Still photography. Not more than two still photographers, each using not more than two camera bodies and two lenses, shall be permitted in the courtroom during a judicial proceeding at any one time.
  3. Television. Not more than two television cameras, each operated by not more than one camera person, shall be permitted in the courtroom during a proceeding. Other than the television cameras, recording and broadcast equipment shall be located outside of the courtroom.
  4. Audio. Only one audio system for broadcast shall be permitted in a proceeding. Where possible, audio for all media shall be from any existing audio system present in the courtroom. If no technically suitable audio system exists, microphones, wiring, and recording equipment shall be furnished and temporarily installed by the news media without public expense, shall not interfere with the sound quality of any existing courtroom audio system, shall be operated by one person and shall be located in places designated in advance by the judge or designee. Where possible, electronic audio recording equipment and any operating personnel shall be located out of the courtroom.
  5. Sufficient video and audio tape capacities should be provided to obviate the need to make changes except during court recess.
  6. No equipment or clothing of any extended coverage personnel shall bear any insignia or identification of the individual medium or network involved in extended coverage.
- (d) Location of equipment and personnel. Equipment and operating personnel shall be located in, and coverage of the proceedings shall take place from, an area or areas within the courtroom designated by the judge. The area or areas designated shall provide reasonable access to the proceeding to be covered. No equipment or personnel involved in extended media coverage shall impede

pedestrian traffic movement into, or from, the courthouse, including but not limited to courthouse corridors and courtroom entrances and exits.

- (e) Movement during the proceedings. Television cameras and audio equipment may be installed in or removed from the courtroom only when the court is not in session. Equipment shall not be stored in the courthouse. In addition, such equipment shall at all times be operated from a fixed position. Still photographers and broadcast media personnel shall not move about the courtroom while proceedings are in session, nor shall they engage in any movement attracting undue attention. Still photographers shall not assume body positions inappropriate for the courtroom.
- (f) Decorum. All news media representatives shall be properly attired and shall maintain proper courtroom decorum at all times when covering a judicial proceeding. The judge has discretion to determine proper attire and courtroom decorum.

Approved: January 24, 2012.