



IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FOURTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
Bay, Calhoun, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, and Washington Counties
THE STATE OF FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER #2023-00-09
(Rescinding Administrative Order #2007-00-05)

RE: COURTHOUSE SECURITY

WHEREAS, increased threats and acts of violence directed at witnesses, jurors, litigants, lawyers, court personnel, and judges throughout our nation and locally demonstrate the need for additional security at our county courthouses, courthouse annexes, and any “off-site” courtrooms or office buildings in the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit;

WHEREAS, the protection of the public, the jurors, and courthouse personnel is of the utmost concern of the judges of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit, and by such, a major component of a prompt and efficient administration of justice is preserved;

WHEREAS, Section 43.26, Florida Statutes, and Rule 2.215(b)(2), Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration, establishes that the chief judge of a circuit shall exercise administrative supervision over all courts within the judicial circuit;

WHEREAS, Rule 2.215(b)(3), Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration, directs the chief judge to develop an administrative plan for the efficient and proper administration of all courts within the circuit and accordingly finds it necessary and appropriate to establish responsibilities and guidelines related to courthouse security; and

WHEREAS, Subsection 29.008(1)(e), Florida Statutes, requires counties to fund the cost of security of facilities for the circuit and county courts including the security needs of such buildings and other court related functions.

NOW, THEREFORE, it is ORDERED and ADJUDGED that the following procedures concerning courthouse security shall be followed:

I. General Provisions

ALL PERSONS, with the exception of those specifically enumerated in Section II of this Order, shall be prohibited from carrying or possessing firearms, weapons, or destructive devices, as defined in Section 790.001, Florida Statutes, in a courthouse, courthouse annex, “off-site” courthouse office building or courtroom (hereinafter collectively referred to as the “courthouse”) in the six counties of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit. Further, ALL PERSONS are prohibited from

carrying or being in possession of any other device(s) or instrument(s) that could be used or perceived to be used as a physical threat to persons or property in the courthouses of the Fourteenth Judicial Circuit.

Prohibitions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Pocket knives of any size;
- Scissors;
- Firearms, stun guns, or any item which shoots a projectile;
- Ammunition;
- Fireworks;
- Flammable liquids.

To enforce the prohibition, each Sheriff and his/her appointed deputies or bailiff are empowered to stop all persons entering the courthouses to conduct a security search. Security equipment, purchased by funds provided by the county, which will allow for the scanning of person and of property in the least intrusive means practicable should be used to assist the deputies and bailiffs to determine the person's compliance with the administrative order and ensure the safety of the occupants of the courthouse. The discovery of illegal weapons, contraband as defined in Section 932.701, Florida Statutes, or other violations of criminal statutes will result in the immediate notification of law enforcement so that an arrest and seizure can be made.

Persons refusing to submit to a search of their person and effects shall be denied access into the courthouse.

II. Exempt Persons

The following individuals are exempt from the prohibition against carrying FIREARMS into the courthouse, based on their job, position, and duties. However, such persons SHALL NOT carry firearms into the courthouse if the purpose of their visit to the courthouse is personal.

- All law enforcement officers, including federal, state, county, and city, while on official law enforcement business;
- Active and Senior Judges, if licensed pursuant to Section 790.061, Florida Statutes; and
- Magistrates and Hearing Officers, if licensed to carry a concealed firearm pursuant to Section 790.06, Florida Statutes;
- Any person deemed by a presiding judge authorized to carry a concealed weapon in his/her courtroom, per Section 790.06 (12) (a) 5, Florida Statutes.

III. Admission Searches

- A. Any person (excluding courthouse personnel entering the secured personnel entrance) desiring to enter the courthouse shall enter through the authorized entrance and pass through security equipment (e.g., magnetometer) where available, or be scanned by a hand-held scanning device.

- B. Any person who activates the security equipment will be asked to empty his/her pockets and to pass through the security device a second time. If, after this second review, security concerns remain, the person shall be subject to a more thorough search to identify all objects which activated the security equipment.
- C. Any person, prior to passing through any security equipment, shall place any purse, package, briefcase, wallet, computer or other electronic equipment, or any other item into the container provided and allow the equipment to either be physically inspected by the security officer or scanned by the security equipment.
- D. Any person with a pacemaker, internal cardiac defibrillator, or other such device should notify the security officer and present a medical card confirming such so that the person can avoid the magnetometer (if being used). The person will then be subject to security checks which may include use of a hand-held device.
- E. If illegal firearms, weapons, destructive devices, or contraband as defined above are found during a search, an arrest and seizure may occur.
- F. All courthouse personnel shall either enter through the separate secured personnel entrance (if applicable) or, if they choose to enter through the main entrance, must show courthouse ID badge bearing their photo, to avoid security screening.

IV. Notice

One of the following two notices shall be posted in a conspicuous place at all courthouse entrances where applicable:

FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE PUBLIC

All Persons and Personal Belongings Entering the Courthouse Will be Searched. No Weapons of Any Kind or Any Item that can be used as a Weapon is Allowed on this Property Except by Sworn Law Enforcement Officers on Official Duty. Please be Patient. The Security Checkpoint is for YOUR Safety. Thank you.

-- OR --

For the Protection of the Public, All Persons Entering these Premises Must Pass Through the Magnetometer and May be Subject to a Limited Search. All Packages, Briefcases, Pocketbooks, or Other Items Carried by a Person Must be Offered for Inspection if Such Person Wishes to Enter the Building. Illegal Weapons or other Contraband Discovered in the Course of These Search Procedures Will be Seized and the Person Found in Possession of Such Items May be Arrested and Apprehended on Site.

V. For All Courthouses

All attorneys, who are members in good standing of the Florida Bar, desiring to enter a Courthouse and avoid security screening, may show picture ID and the attorney's Florida Bar Card and/or current 14th Circuit attorney card.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers, at Panama City, Bay County, this 5th day of October, 2023.



CHRISTOPHER N. PATTERSON
CHIEF JUDGE



**A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY
BILL KINSAUL CLERK
OF THE CIRCUIT COURT**

By *Shirley Barlow*
Deputy Clerk