Seventh Circuit Court – Media Information

MEDIA RELATIONS

The court staff is here to help you in whatever way they can. Their role is to provide you with information, not legal help. They have been instructed to not answer questions if they do not know the answer, or if your question requires advice or opinions instead of factual information. They may refer you to other resources to help you more effectively.

MEDIA LIAISON

Circuit Administrator Liz Hassett is the **media liaison** for the Seventh Judicial Circuit. Ms. Hassett is the central contact person for all media inquiries, and her office is on the third floor of the Pennington County Courthouse. She can be reached at 605-394-2571.

More information regarding resources for the media and how to request expanded media coverage is available on the UJS website at https://ujs.sd.gov/for-the-media.

Requests for **access to documents** in a case file should be directed to the clerk of court's office in the applicable county. The clerk will inform you of costs for copying or conducting records searches.

DECORUM

Media representatives are expected to be sufficiently familiar with court proceedings to conduct themselves so as not to interfere with the dignity of the proceedings, or to distract counsel or the court. All media personnel shall be properly attired.

The judge presiding over a specific case may make special rules as to **where interviews may be conducted** in or around the courthouse. This may change from time to time depending on the nature of the case. Generally, interviews of parties, counsel, witnesses, or members of the public are not allowed on the same floor as the courtroom nor in the clerk's office. Check with media liaison Liz Hassett if you are not sure where to proceed.

All courtrooms are open to the public except in those cases designated confidential by law. The judge may designate special assigned seating for media but is not required to do so.

Reporters or other media personnel will not be allowed to impede the movement of court staff, lawyers, parties, witnesses, or spectators in and out of the courthouse or the courtroom. This may include areas near stairwells or elevators, certain interior office doorways, or entrances/exits to the building where the proceeding is being held. This applies to interviews and reporting.

CAMERAS AND EQUIPMENT IN THE COURTROOM

On March 28, 2024, then Presiding Judge Craig A. Pfeifle signed a Standing Order outlining the photography and audio or video recordings within the Courthouses of the 7th Judicial Circuit.

This order states the following:

Pursuant to SDCL chapter 16-20 (including, but not limited to, SDCL 16-20-1(b)-(c), 16-20-2(c)-(3), 16-20-3(b), 16-20-3(h), 16-20-3(p), and 16-20-3(s)) and Appendix A to SDCL chapter 16-2, South Dakota Code of Judicial Conduct, Cannon 3(B)(13), photography and use of audio or video recording devices are prohibited in all courtrooms, adjacent public hallways, and other publicly accessible areas of the courthouse unless permission has been provided by the presiding judge or granted by the court under SDCL chapter 16-20 in association with media coverage of a specific judicial proceeding.

Further information can be found in Supreme Court Rule 10-09 and SDCL Chapter 16-20 at https://sdlegislature.gov/Statutes/16-20.

Cell phones, pagers, beepers, smart phones, or similar electronic devices must be turned off before entering the courtroom and are not to be activated in the courtroom.

FEES

There is a fee for photocopy and fax services. Photocopy fees vary depending on state or county-owned equipment. The cost is usually $ .20/page.

A record search fee may apply if you do not have a file number for the case of person you are inquiring about and are not a party to the case. That fee ranges from $5-$20.

Payments are accepted at the time the service is provided unless you have an established charge account with the Unified Judicial System. To request an account, please contact UJS Public Access Record System (PARS) support at UJSPARSsupport@ujs.state.sd.us.