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SUPREME COURT OF VIRGINIA



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Media Policies for Coverage of Arguments in the Supreme Court of Virginia October 26, 2015

1. A member of the media is defined as employees of a news service that is eligible for pool participation as recognized by the Virginia Press Association (VPA) and the Virginia Association of Broadcasters (VAB). Any such member who wishes to photograph or video-record an oral argument in the Supreme Court of Virginia must submit a written request to the Clerk of this Court at least two business days before the arguments and provide a copy of such request to counsel or self-represented parties in the matter. Whether to grant a request to photograph or video-record an oral argument shall be at the sole discretion of the Court. If the request is granted, the member of the media who appears in court shall present a valid media identification card issued by the Virginia State Police.
2. No more than one video camera, operated by not more than one person, will be admitted into the courtroom, and said camera must be mounted on a tripod. Likewise, only one still photographer, utilizing one camera and not more than two lenses for that camera, will be permitted into the courtroom. Only equipment that does not produce distracting sound or light shall be employed in the courtroom. No artificial lighting (other than that normally present in the courtroom) shall be employed in the courtroom. Equipment and operators thereof shall be placed in an area designated by the Clerk.
3. Cellphones and computers (including laptops and tablets) are prohibited from the courtroom and may not be used for audio or video recording, even if a person has been granted permission to cover the proceedings.
4. Only still and video cameras shall be employed in the courtroom. Audio recordings of the argument may only be obtained using the live audio feed located in the courtroom (the live audio feed in the courtroom requires an XLR cable to connect). Members of the media are responsible for providing their own equipment suitable to connect to the live audio feed. Members of the media are advised that the Court records oral arguments, and these recordings are posted to the Court's website (www.courts.state.va.us) shortly after the last day of the session during which the case is argued.

5. On the day coverage is to take place, all equipment to be used to photograph or video record a proceeding must be in place by 8:45 a.m., unless other arrangements are made—in advance—with the Clerk. If due to technical difficulties or any other reason this is not possible, the Court may rescind its permission to cover proceedings that day.
6. Photographers, videographers, and technical support staff (“media personnel”) covering a proceeding shall not move about the courtroom while an argument is in progress, and equipment, once positioned, shall not be moved, except during a recess or at the conclusion of the day’s proceedings. Media personnel shall avoid activity that might distract participants or impair the dignity of the proceedings, shall observe the customs of the Court, and shall be dressed appropriately.
7. The Court may terminate coverage of any portion of the proceedings or of the remainder of the proceedings if the Court determines that continuing coverage is disturbing the proceeding, will impede justice, or will create unfairness for any party.
8. If more than one person files a request to photograph or record an oral argument, the requesting parties must pool their efforts to limit the number of cameras and recording devices in the courtroom to that approved by the Court. Any such “pooling” arrangements among the media shall be through the established procedures set forth in the respective Guidelines of the Virginia Association of Broadcasters and the Virginia Press Association, and shall be the sole responsibility of the media, without calling upon the Court to mediate any dispute as to the appropriate media representative or equipment authorized to cover a particular proceeding. In the absence of advance media agreement on disputed equipment or personnel issues, the Court may exclude all contesting media personnel from a proceeding.