

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE
SEVENTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT, IN
AND FOR BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO.I-91-B-6A

IN RE:

CAMERAS IN THE COURTROOM

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 Co. v. McIntosh, 340 So.2d 904, 909 (Fla. 1976); and

WHEREAS, the Florida 4th District Court of Appeals has stated that "Nonetheless, trial courts clearly have the inherent right to control judicial proceedings, and if need be, to close the proceedings." State ex. rel. Gore Newspapers Co. v. Tyson, 313 So.2d 777, 781 (Fla.4th DCA 1975)

WHEREAS, the Florida Supreme Court has promulgated rules entitled "Standards of Conduct and Technology Governing Electronic Media and Still Photography Coverage 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 2.050 of the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration, it is ORDERED THAT:

(1) When the trial judge invokes this order, the Court Administrator's Office in conjunction with the Broward Sheriff's Office is authorized to develop a detailed plan to achieve the goals of the Order. Copies of the plan shall be available to the press and the public.

(2) The court administrator shall designate a member of the court's 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.

(1a) Any representative of the media wishing to cover proceeding under this order must obtain and display, a media pass from the Office of Video Operations, Room 241a on the second floor of the courthouse, prior to admittance to any courtroom.

(2a) It is recommended that members of the media obtain and display the media credentials from the court media coordinator for all cases and/or activities within the courthouse.

(3) The Court's Media Coordinator upon proper notification, shall convene a meeting of interested media representatives and a representative of the Broward Sheriff's Office for the purpose of establishing a Media Committee.

(4) The media committee, consisting of at least one representative from the video, audio and print media, shall designate (a) the pool television camera person for coverage inside the courtroom, (b) the pool still photographer for inside the courtroom, (c) the pool television camera person for coverage outside the courtroom, and (d) the pool still photographer for coverage outside the courtroom. Additionally, the media committee shall allocate, on an equitable basis and from among those holding court-issued press credentials, courtroom seating assignments in the area reserved for media representatives. This allocation shall be made on a daily basis and shall be reported to the court's press officer who shall provide identification which will entitle the bearer to enter the courtroom and utilize the reserved area.

(5) When 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 the media to permit coverage of the proceeding 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 pursuant to the guidelines set forth in re petition of Post-Newsweek Stations, Florida, Inc. 370 So.2nd 764 (Sup. Ct., 1979), the following rules are established to govern media access to court proceedings in the central courthouse:

1. All television, radio and print reporters, cameramen, photographers are to exhibit the court-issued media credentials obtained from the court's media coordinator at all times.

2. No person shall enter the well of the courtroom at any time without the expressed permission of the court.

3. As the litigation progresses, the court will establish in advance a daily schedules for recesses and lunch breaks. All persons in the public area shall remain in the courtroom until the judge declares a recess and has exited. There are no in/out privileges. No pass-bearing person will be allowed to enter the courtroom once the judge has assumed the bench.

4. So as not to interfere with court proceedings or with a litigant or interested party's rights, no interviews are permitted within or immediately outside the courtroom at any time. No member of the media may attempt to interview any attorney, witness, court personnel, court participant or member of the public within or immediately outside the courtroom.

5. Spotlights or flash units should be used in the interview areas only; not in the courtrooms.

6. So as not to cause a hazard to the public, media personnel should not station themselves in the hallways or doorways for the purpose of recording courtroom proceedings or the entrances and/or exits of litigants.

7. For the safety of the public, media personnel should ensure that no hallways, exits or emergency exits are blocked by media equipment and/or personnel.

8. So as not to cause a safety hazard, media interviews shall not obstruct traffic in narrow corridors, and an interview location shall be designated during the media conference prior to the start of the trial.

9. The media should notify the Court Administrator's Office of trials they wish to cover so that arrangements can be made for media personnel/equipment.

10. To decrease the risk of injuries to persons in the courthouse, cables should not be taped to the floor across corridors or doorways. They should be raised and secured above these high traffic areas.

* WHEN DROP CEILINGS ARE AVAILABLE CABLES SHOULD BE SUSPENDED BY HANGER/HOOKS FROM CROSS BEAMS.

11. The trial judge shall designate or instruct the court's media coordinator to designate a specified location in the courtroom for the pool television camera person and pool still photographer. These persons shall comply strictly with the Supreme Court's rules Governing Electronic Media and Still Photography Coverage of Judicial Proceedings.

12. The trial judge shall designate a specified location outside the courtroom for the pool television camera and the pool still photographer. This location outside the courtroom shall be at a designated area which shall not be within Ten (10) feet in either direction of courtroom exit door(s). The location shall be chosen to insure the safety and free and unrestricted ingress and egress of the general public, (including the litigants of the subject case) in the hallway areas adjacent to all courtroom(s), and to and from any courtroom(s) to the public elevator(s) escalator(s) and exit ways. No other television cameras, still cameras, or other broadcasting or recording equipment will be permitted on the courthouse floors of 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, such as the lobby area(s), etc.

13. 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' family friends and court personal, (b) media representatives, and (c) general public. Category "a" will be regulated by the trial court's bailiff; category "b" will be allocated by the media coordinator.

OTHER NEEDS

(1) By arrangement 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 constitute a safety hazard or an obstruction to pedestrian traffic.

(3) Satellite trucks and/or remote/live trucks must be parked in an area designated by the City of Fort Lauderdale and/or the Broward County Sheriff's Office.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers at Fort Lauderdale, Broward County,
Florida on this the 3rd day of September, 1991

/s/DALE ROSS
DALE ROSS, Chief Judge