



FAQ: Are cell phones allowed in courts?

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Most people expect to be able to take their smartphone with them when conducting business in a courthouse; however, many still do not allow it. A cell phone is not considered a luxury these days. We all depend on smartphones to do much more than merely make calls and send texts. Smartphones store private personal information and are used as a pocket-sized tool for calendaring your life, financial transactions, social media, driving directions, photos, videos, and the news, among others.

Some courts have recently revised their policies and NCSC has reexamined the latest information. A 2021 [Tiny Chat](#) looked at cell phones in the court and listed policies and rules from different locales.

The reasons to ban cellphones in courts were discussed in a *Judicature* [article](#) in 2018 written by NCSC Knowledge and Information Analyst [Bill Raftery](#). It discussed how state courts consider the security of the people in courtrooms, the security of the proceedings and try to avoid cell phone disruptions.

Delaware's Committee to Review the Prohibition on Personal Electronic Devices recently issued a [report](#) examining the state's 2005 prohibition on personal electronic devices (PEDs) inside state courthouses. The report included an expansive listing of rules in this area [from other jurisdictions](#), as well as resolutions from entities from the Conference of Chief Justices, the Conference of State Court Administrators and the American Bar Association.

Some of the recommendations of the Delaware commission included allowing potential jurors to bring PEDs with some restrictions. They also recommended that a "secondary security screening could occur before admission onto the floor, and non-exempt parties would be required to place PEDs in a storage locker or a secure pouch to prevent use in the courtroom." Courts should also be able to add extra storage space for this purpose. As a result of this report, Delaware started a [pilot project](#) in February 2022 in several courts. If the project is successful, it will expand to other courts in the state.

In January 2022, the Illinois Supreme Court issued a [policy](#) allowing PEDs in the courtrooms. The policy recognizes that PEDs are necessary for court users and self-represented litigants to conduct court business and sometimes to present evidence in their cases.

Is your court reconsidering cell phones in courtrooms? Share it with us Knowledge@ncsc.org or call 800-616-6164. Follow NCSC on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), or [Vimeo](#).