

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR SUMTER COUNTY, FLORIDA**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO.: S-2025-53

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER REGARDING
SECURITY OF THE SUMTER COUNTY COURTHOUSE**

WHEREAS, the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Sumter County, Florida, are of paramount concern to the Court; and

WHEREAS, tragic incidents have taken place in court facilities in Florida and in the United States resulting in serious injuries and loss of life; and

WHEREAS, proceedings taking place within the Sumter County Courthouse and the Clerk's Office can be fraught with extreme emotion and potentially present extreme danger to those persons who are a party to the events taking place; and

WHEREAS, the Sumter County Board of County Commissioners has appropriated and continues to appropriate funds for the purpose of improving the safety and security of those persons who conduct business within the Sumter County Courthouse and the Clerk's Office, including citizens and employees alike; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Judge, and other Judge(s) that he may designate, is responsible for the administration of the courts within the Fifth Judicial Circuit, as provided in Rule 2.215 (a), Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration; and

WHEREAS, the Chief Judge is required to regulate the use of all court facilities, pursuant to Rule 2.215 (b)(7); and

WHEREAS, the undersigned, the Honorable Mary P. Hatcher, has been designated Administrative Judge for Sumter County, pursuant to Rule 2.215 (b)(5), Florida Rules of General Practice and Judicial Administration.

It is therefore **ORDERED** that access to the Sumter County Courthouse shall be regulated as follows:

I. ACCESS TO COURTHOUSE:

The Sumter County Courthouse is designated as a Secure Facility.

1. **Entrance:** The Public shall enter the building through the main entrance.

2. **Screening/Prohibited Items:**

All persons entering the main entrance of the Courthouse Facility shall be subject to security screening.

a. Public/Employees:

- i. No Firearms, to include rifles and shotguns, ammunition, and/or firearm magazines or any other item determined to be a weapon by Courthouse Security, is allowed in the Courthouse unless otherwise provided for herein. Persons not authorized under provisions of this Order to be in possession of prohibited objects will be denied entry into the Courthouse. However, all personal belongings which would constitute a non-firearm weapon may be surrendered or returned to the owner's vehicle.
- ii. All bags, handbags or backpacks brought into the Courthouse Facility, will be subject to screening by

Courthouse Security personnel.

- iii. Any person found to be illegally in possession of any prohibited object or in possession of any illegal object or substance will be subject to arrest.

b. **Law Enforcement**

- i. As used in this section, “law enforcement officer” means all persons holding an active certification from the Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission as a law enforcement officer or correctional officer as defined in section 943.10(1), (2), (6), (7), (8), or (9), Florida Statutes, and those who are elected, employed, or appointed as full-time, part-time, or auxiliary/reserve law enforcement officer or correctional officer.
- ii. All law enforcement officers who are authorized by law to carry firearms shall be entitled to remain armed while in the Courthouse Facility under the following conditions:
 - a.) They are on official business, and
 - b.) All non-concealed firearms shall be in a “retention-style” holster.
 - c.) Law enforcement officers and employees of the State Attorney’s Office, who are legally authorized to carry a weapon must submit to screening but may at the conclusion of screening present valid identification and continue on with official courthouse business.

- iii. Courthouse Security personnel shall make inquiry of each officer as to whether the law enforcement officer is in the building on official, non-official, or personal business and may request information sufficient to ascertain the nature of the law enforcement officer's business and, if applicable, whether the law enforcement officer is authorized by his/her superior officers to carry firearms while off-duty.
- iv. A law enforcement officer who is not on official business, but who is authorized by his/her superior officers to carry firearms on or about his/her persons while off-duty pursuant to section 790.052, Florida Statutes, shall NOT be entitled to remain armed while in the Courthouse Facility, and the following procedure applies:
 - The law enforcement officer shall be permitted to enter the courthouse with a firearm. However, prior to the law enforcement officer being permitted to pass through security, Courthouse Security shall notify the Sheriff's personnel. The Sheriff's personnel shall escort the law enforcement officer from the entrance to the bailiff's office, where the law enforcement officer shall be permitted to store his/her firearm while he/she conducts non-official or personal business, including but not limited to, appearing in court as a party. At the conclusion of his/her business in the Courthouse Facility, the law enforcement officer shall be permitted to retrieve his/her firearm from secure storage and shall

therefore immediately exit the Courthouse Facility through the public entry/exit point.

- v. If the law enforcement officer has entered the Courthouse Facility for the purpose of non-official or personal business and has not been authorized by his/her superior officers to carry firearms on or about his/her person while off-duty pursuant to Florida Statue 790.052, he/she shall not be permitted to carry his/her firearm in the Courthouse Facility and instead must secure the weapon in his/her vehicle.
- vi. Any non-uniformed law enforcement officer or employee of the State Attorney's Office carrying a firearm, who appears in any courtroom, shall keep their firearm secure on their person at all times and shall promptly notify a bailiff and/or the presiding Judge that he/she has a firearm on or about their person.
- vii. Nothing in this Administrative Order is intended to, nor shall it be construed to, abridge, abrogate, nullify, or otherwise impinge on any Judge in the Fifth Judicial Circuit, or any Judge from any other Circuit sitting in Sumter County, having the power to exclude weapons, at their sole discretion, in their courtroom.

c. The Judiciary

Consistent with section 790.06 (12) (1) 5, Florida Statutes, members of the judiciary are authorized to carry a concealed weapon or concealed firearm. See also section 790.061, Florida Statutes. Pursuant to this Order, the general magistrate is also authorized to carry a concealed weapon or concealed firearm in the Courthouse Facility.

II. AFTER HOURS ACCESS TO COURTHOUSE:

- After hours meetings/events: with the exception of scheduled County Commission meetings and court proceedings, security operations must be notified of any meeting occurring outside of normal business hours.
- Sumter County employees with the proper credentials and approved access rights may access the courthouse through any service entrance door as needed to perform their work function.

III. COURTHOUSE DECORUM:

All persons entering the Courthouse shall be appropriately attired. Each individual Judge shall make a determination as to any dress code applicable to his or her individual courtroom and shall so advise Courthouse Security staff as to those limitations.

IV. SMOKING:

The Courthouse Facility is designated as non-smoking and smoking shall not be permitted within Courthouse Facility. This includes the use of E- Cigarettes, Vaping and/or other smoking accessories.

V. SOLICITATION, LEAFLETING AND DEMONSTRATIONS:

Commercial, political and/or private solicitation and/or leafleting is not permitted within the public areas of the Courthouse Facility. Charitable solicitations approved by the Court Operations Manager are allowed.

No one shall parade, stand, move in procession, and/or display a flag, banner, or device inside the Courthouse with the intent to bring public notice to any party, organization or movement.

VI. MEDIA ACCESS:

Media Access in the courtroom is at the discretion of the sitting Judge.

VII. ELECTRONIC DEVICES

- Electronic devices, including but not limited to, cell phones, cameras, body worn cameras, computers, and smart watches are prohibited from being brought into the Courthouse Facility with the following exceptions:
 - i. Any courthouse employee displaying employee identification;
 - ii. Attorney or employee of the State Attorney's Office;
 - iii. Any special agent, law enforcement officer;
 - iv. Any person seeking to photograph public records as outlined in section 119.07 (3) (b), Florida Statutes;
 - v. Any person conducting official business with the Clerk of Court; and

- vi. Any person requiring an electronic device for medical needs who provided advance notice to the presiding judge and ADA Coordinator.

VIII. ENFORCEMENT:

The Sumter County Sheriff's Office, Court Services Division and staff, are directed to enforce this and any other specifically promulgated rules at all times.

DONE AND ORDERED in Chambers, at Bushnell, Sumter County, Florida on this 6th day of October 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary P. Hatcher', written over a horizontal line.

Mary P. Hatcher
Administrative Judge
Sumter County