



## Policies of the 153<sup>rd</sup> District Court

**Security** – All courtroom participants must pass through the security station and metal detectors located at the entrance of the courthouse. The carrying of guns and weapons into the courthouse is expressly forbidden under Sec 46.03 paragraph (3) of the Texas Penal Code. During the security screening process, the security personnel will require all visitors to empty their pockets and place the items in a tray for examination. All items carried into the courthouse will be thoroughly screened before the items are allowed into the courtroom. Visitors should consider this process when deciding what to wear or carry into the courthouse with them.

All courtroom participants are required to sign in with the bailiff at the time of their arrival. Participants may be required to provide additional identifying and contact information as necessary. The bailiff will seat courtroom participants appropriately based upon the information provided.

**Courtroom Etiquette** - All courtroom visitors and participants are expected to be calm and quiet regardless of how dramatic opposing opinions may differ or how passionately one holds to their convictions in the courtroom. Civility must be respected in the courtroom, which means that each member is entitled to speak and each member can expect a fair hearing according to the law.

**Dress Code** – Courtroom participants are expected to wear appropriate business attire in the courtroom. Courtroom participants are expected to dress neatly and to exercise common sense in selecting clothing and footwear appropriate for court. Women should wear suits, dresses, shirts with blouses or sweaters, or tailored slacks with professional blouses. Men should wear suits, sports coats or collared dress shirts with a tie and dress slacks. Attorneys not wearing the appropriate business attire may not be allowed to participate in courtroom hearings or trials.

**Electronic Devices** – While in the courtroom, all cellular telephones, pagers and other electronic devices will be turned off. This policy does not apply to the attorney(s) representing litigants at the counsel tables. Attorneys should have all electronic devices turned to the silent mode during hearings and turned off if such use becomes distracting.

**Recordings and Photographs** - Taking photographs, visual recordings, or recording audio in the courtroom is strictly forbidden unless the Judge gives expressed permission to use such devices.

**Food and Beverages** – No food or beverages are allowed in the courtroom except water in a spill proof container. Chewing gum and or candy is not allowed in the courtroom.

**Authority** – As an elected official the judge not only represents the ultimate authority in the court, but also the law. Attorneys, clients, witnesses, and jurors must observe courteous and orderly behavior at all times. Failure to follow basic courtroom etiquette could result in the participant's removal from the courtroom by the bailiff or arrested under Sec. 38.13 of the Texas Penal Code -Hindering Proceedings by Disorderly Conduct. Etiquette is essential for making a good impression. This is especially true in the courtroom, where there are many stated and unstated rules of conduct for litigants, attorneys, jurors, and other attendees.