

Administrative Office of Courts Wireless Communications Policy

The establishment of this policy sets the standards for the usage of wireless communications devices by Chancery and Circuit Judges.

I. Scope of Policy

No judge may directly or indirectly use, or allow the use of, AOC property of any kind—including property leased to AOC—for other than official court-related business or activities. In addition, all judges shall protect and conserve AOC property, including wireless communication equipment. Wireless communication equipment includes cellular phones, and personal digital assistant devices, as well as any similar devices that perform some or all of these functions. Judges are hereby notified that AOC will enforce this policy through a variety of methods and may monitor use of wireless communication equipment to assure compliance.

II. Procedures

- Wireless communication devices shall be used for **official court-related business only**. Any non-business, unofficial or inappropriate use of an AOC-provided wireless communication device, including personal calls, will result in appropriate disciplinary action and/or the loss of the use of the wireless communication device.
- Before a wireless communication device is assigned to a judge, the AOC Executive Director must certify in writing the need for the device and associated service. No judge may have more than one wireless communication device assigned and paid for with state funds.
- Each judge is responsible for determining the most cost-effective communication device and/or service for conducting official court-related business. In order to make this determination, each judge is responsible for knowing the details of the wireless communication service plan utilized, including unit costs and any monthly service caps. Each judge is responsible for reviewing and certifying billings for each device and service utilized and for assessing the need for any change in usage patterns and/or plans based on actual utilization and cost.
- A detailed billing must be provided for all accounts, and **all billings are considered public records subject to disclosure under the Mississippi Public Records Act**.
- To obtain approval for a wireless communication device, a valid e-mail address is required for each judge to allow the transmission of monthly billing statements. Once billing statements are received, **each judge is responsible for verifying the billing details monthly and indicating by signature the following: (1) billing accuracy; (2) that all calls are related to official court business; and (3) that the calling plan is appropriate for the judge's business needs**. All judges are responsible for keeping a current, valid e-mail address on file with the Supreme Court Finance Office.

A copy of the billing statement along with the aforementioned verifications must be printed and submitted to the Supreme Court Office of Finance on a monthly basis. Failure of any judge to promptly provide the appropriate documentation will result in having the service disconnected. Once service is disconnected, all wireless communication equipment belonging to the AOC shall be returned to the AOC within thirty (30) days and the judge will not be eligible to have service reconnected.

- AOC shall not approve reimbursement for judges for any charges incurred on personal wireless communication devices.
- At the beginning of each fiscal year, an amount equal to the annual cost of service for any wireless device assigned to a judge will be deducted from the judge's office allowance to ensure that sufficient funds are available to cover the cost of the service agreement. Any additional charges will be immediately deducted from the judge's office allowance when the billing statement is received by the AOC. If insufficient funds are available, the judge will be contacted and informed to reimburse the AOC for said charges. Failure to promptly comply will result in service disruption or having the service disconnected. Once service is disconnected, the judge will be required to return to the AOC all wireless communication equipment belonging to the AOC within thirty (30) days and will not be eligible to have service reconnected.
- If any **replacement fees** are incurred, the judge is **personally** responsible for replacing AOC's inventory. The office allowance funds **cannot** be used to replace AOC inventory.
- Judges should be aware that cellular phone transmissions are not secure transmissions. Confidential information regarding official business should be transmitted from a secure environment.
- **Any judge assigned a wireless communication device must indicate concurrence with this Wireless Communications Policy by signing below.** The signed copy of this policy shall be maintained in the judge's office allowance file for the pertinent fiscal year.

SIGNATURE

DATE

PLEASE PRINT NAME

E-Mail Address for Monthly Billing Statement