O R D E R

The use of pagers, cell phones, and other personal communication devices has increased dramatically and many users see them as a necessary incident to their work and personal lives. While these devices may be seen as enhancing communication, they are also increasingly being recognized as a distraction and as having no place in certain venues.

Accordingly, as of the date of this Order, the use of audible pagers, cell phones, and any other personal communication device by any attorneys, jurors, staff members, litigants, witnesses, or members of the general public, is banned in all courtrooms in this State.[1] Except with the express permission of the presiding judge, these devices must be turned off, or placed in a silent mode, such as vibrate, prior to being carried into any courtroom. Should a device which has been placed in a silent mode activate in the courtroom, the person possessing the device must exit the courtroom prior to responding in any fashion.

Unless otherwise specified by the presiding judge, jurors actually selected to serve on a jury must leave their cell phones, pagers, or other communications devices with the Clerk's Office, bailiffs, or other responsible individual identified by the presiding judge, when they arrive at the courthouse in the morning and may retrieve them during lunch and at the end of the day.

Violation of the terms of this Order may result in the confiscation of the equipment and the violator may be held in contempt of court and subject to sanctions.

Notice of the contents of this Order shall be given to jurors and posted on courtroom doors.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

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/S/
Chief Justice Jean H. Toal

Columbia, South Carolina
August 25, 2000

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[1] This Order does not apply to law enforcement officers unless the officer is present in the courtroom as a witness.