

# **RULES OF DECORUM rev 12/7/05**

Appendix 2 to the Local Rules for the Courts of Dallas County  
(rev 12/7/05)

## **RULES OF DECORUM FOR THE COURTS OF DALLAS COUNTY**

### **1. COURTS WHERE APPLICABLE**

The following rules of decorum shall be applicable to and shall govern cases tried in the Civil District Courts and County Courts at Law of Dallas County, Texas.

### **2. FORMAL OPENING**

Immediately before the scheduled time for the beginning of court sessions, the Bailiff shall direct all court officers and spectators to their seats and shall bring order. As the Judge enters the courtroom, the Bailiff shall state, "Everyone please rise." While everyone is still standing he shall make an appropriate announcement such as, "The \_\_\_\_\_ Court is now in session, The Honorable \_\_\_\_\_, Judge Presiding. Be seated, please."

### **3. FORMAL CLOSING**

At the end of the trial day the Court shall tell the Jury that the Court will be in recess until "tomorrow morning at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock," at which time the Court Bailiff shall state, "The \_\_\_\_\_ Court of Dallas County, Texas, will be in recess until tomorrow morning at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock a.m. Good day, ladies and gentlemen."

### **4. CONDUCT REQUIRED OF ALL PERSONS WHILE ATTENDING COURT; UNLESS OTHERWISE PERMITTED BY THE TRIAL JUDGE**

- a. No reading of newspapers or magazines in the courtroom at any time, unrelated to proper participation in the case then before the Court;
- b. No bottles, paper cups or beverage containers into the courtroom;
- c. No edibles or food containers or packaging in the courtroom;
- d. No feet on tables, chairs or benches;
- e. Do not sit on tables, railings, desks or arms of chairs;
- f. No person shall walk through, sleep or loiter in the courtroom while any proceedings are being held (or court in session);
- g. No making noises or talking by persons unless during the proper participation in the matter then before the Court;
- h. No gum chewing in the courtroom;
- i. Before entering a courtroom all persons shall first remove overcoat, hats, etc;
- j. Before entering a courtroom all persons shall first ensure that all cell phones, pagers, or other electronic

devices as appropriate are turned off or configured in such a manner so as to prevent any interruption of the proceedings before the court; and

k. While appearing before the court, or at any time during the trial of a matter, no person shall by any facial expression, nonverbal gesture, guttural utterances, or any other conduct exhibit approval or disapproval of any testimony elicited or any statement or transaction which has occurred in the courtroom.

## 5. CONDUCT REQUIRED OF COURT OFFICERS

a. All counsel are admonished to respect the letter and spirit of all Disciplinary Rules including particularly those dealing with testimony by counsel participating in the trial and discussion of the facts or law of the case with the Court outside of the courtroom and not in the presence of opposing counsel, the Court may enforce the same by appropriate action.

b. The lawyers, the Judge and all officers of the Court shall be prompt at all sessions and in the dispatch of all court business.

c. All lawyers and court officials shall dress in keeping with proper courtroom decorum. All male lawyers and court officials shall wear coats and ties in connection with any court appearance, and in connection with any other unscheduled appearance counsel may make related to any matter pending before the court. Female lawyers shall similarly dress in keeping with proper courtroom decorum and rely on common sense and good taste in connection with their selection of appropriate courtroom attire.

d. The following clothing is not appropriate under any circumstances: casual cotton pants; denim pants, jeans, jean jackets, shirts or skirts: any tight, short, sleeveless or revealing clothing; shorts, skorts, capris, and crop pants; sweat suits and other athletic like attire such as leggings, spandex and drawstring pants, t-shirts, golf shirts, and casual tops/shirts and pullovers, and athletic footwear, flip flops, thong sandals and other types of casual sandals, topsiders and moccasins.

e. In addressing the Judge, lawyers shall at all times rise and remain standing to address the Judge from their position at the counsel table. They shall remain at counsel table while interrogating witnesses, except as may be necessary to handle or display exhibits or other appropriate evidence, as permitted by the Court.

f. The Judge shall be respectfully and properly addressed at all times; and counsel shall be impersonal in addressing the Judge.

g. Counsel shall refrain from inviting clients and witnesses into the court clerk's office and the Chambers except upon the direction of the Judge.

h. When the Judge addresses counsel it shall be impersonally as "Counsel" or by last name, rather than by first name.

i. Lawyers shall never lean on the bench or engage the Judge in a confidential manner, except by permission or at the request of the Judge.

j. Lawyers shall advise their clients and witnesses of proper courtroom decorum and attire and seek their full cooperation therewith.

k. After jury voir dire no attorney shall address a juror individually or by name without having first obtained leave of Court. During jury argument no attorney shall ever address a juror individually or by name.

l. The trial attorney should refrain from interrupting the Court or opposing counsel until the statement being made is fully completed, except when necessary to protect his client's rights on the record, and should

respectfully await the completion of the Court's statement or opinion before undertaking to point out objectionable matter.

m. There will be no arguments on objections in the presence of the jury. If counsel desires to argue his point after making his objection and being overruled on an objection, he shall ask the Court to exclude the jury, or ask to approach the bench if appropriate, before he proceeds with such argument. However, argument may be permitted on objections at the discretion of the Court.

n. It shall be improper to approach the Bench or a witness without first obtaining permission to do so.

o. Once an attorney has entered the courtroom and appeared before the Court, he shall not leave without first obtaining permission to do so, or as appropriate upon recess.

p. During the trial of a matter only those counsel participating in the cause then being heard together with the clients shall sit at the counsel table; counsel not participating in the case then under consideration shall not sit at counsel table but shall remain seated within the courtroom, or other locations by consent of the Court.

q. No lawyer, party, or witness should request any member of the Court's staff to notify them of the commencement or resumption of any Court proceedings.

## 6. BAILIFFS

a. The Bailiff shall be present at all times when the Court is in session or in recess, unless excused by the Judge. No duty shall be assigned to the bailiff except upon prior approval by the Judge.

b. The Bailiff shall see that the flag of the United States of America and the flag of the State of Texas are properly displayed and respected in the Courtroom.

c. The Bailiff shall enforce all rules of conduct and decorum and perform other duties assigned by the Judge.