



In one word, how would you describe your approach to interacting with the media?

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① The Slido app must be installed on every computer you're presenting from

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## Court Media Overview

- Welcome & Introduction
- Working with the Media
- High-Profile Cases
- Tips & Tricks
- Q&A

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## Welcome & Introduction

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### Samantha Fisher

Communications Director  
Administrative Office of the Courts

- ▶ News Reporter & Anchor: WKRN, KSL, CNN, WKRN
- ▶ Office of the TN Attorney General & Reporter- 2016-2022
- ▶ Administrative Office of the Courts- March 2024-present

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### Administrative Office of the Courts

Serve as a trusted resource to assist in improving the administration of justice and **promoting confidence in the judiciary.**

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### Website & Publications

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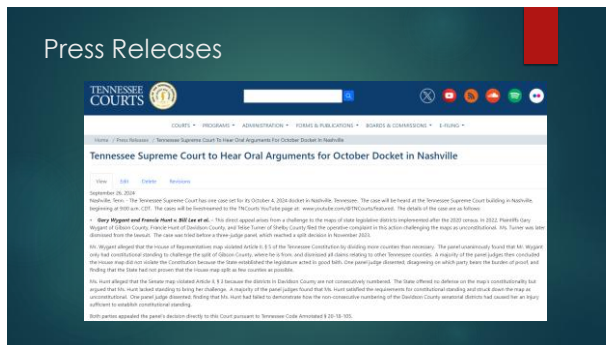
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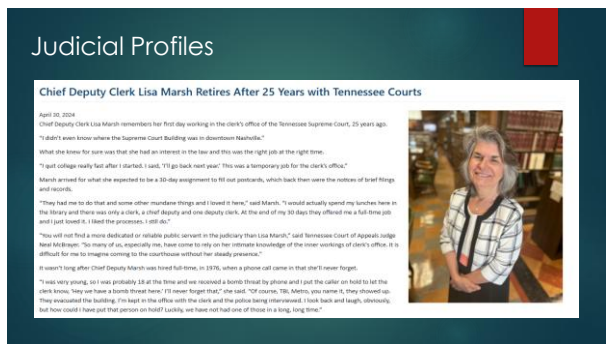
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## Publications



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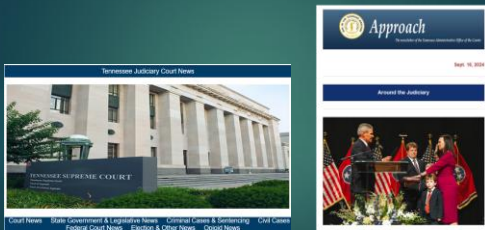
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## Newsletters



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## Podcasting



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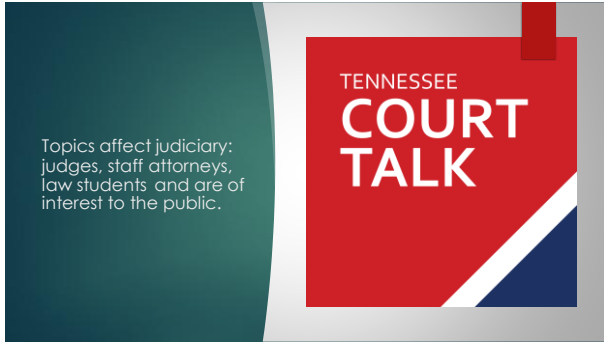
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## Who is the Media?

### Traditional

- ▶ Print
- ▶ Radio
- ▶ TV

### New Media

- ▶ Advocacy and non-profit
- ▶ "Citizen" journalists
- ▶ Bloggers
- ▶ Youtubers

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## John North

WBIR-TV Investigative Journalist



- ▶ Specializes in courts, law enforcement, government and elections
- ▶ Knoxville News Sentinel
- ▶ CNN
- ▶ Kansas City Star

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## Citizen Journalists



Have the right to attend court proceedings and observe the proceedings from the public gallery.

Courtroom rules and procedures apply to everyone, including citizen journalists.

**No Special Privileges:** Citizen journalists do not have special access within the courtroom that professional journalists do not have.

**First Amendment Protections:** Citizen journalists, like all citizens, have First Amendment rights, including the right to free speech and the right to gather information.

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## First Amendment Auditors

- Individuals who record their interactions with public officials on public property, to test the extent to which their First Amendment rights, including freedom of speech and the press, are being respected. These audits often involve filming or photographing these interactions and posting them online.

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First Amendment Auditors

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## What does the law say?



COURTS ARE OPEN IN TENNESSEE  
(EXCEPT FOR JURY SELECTION AND CASES INVOLVING MINORS)



MEDIA AND PUBLIC CAN REPORT ON WHAT THEY SEE



RECORDS CAN BE REQUESTED

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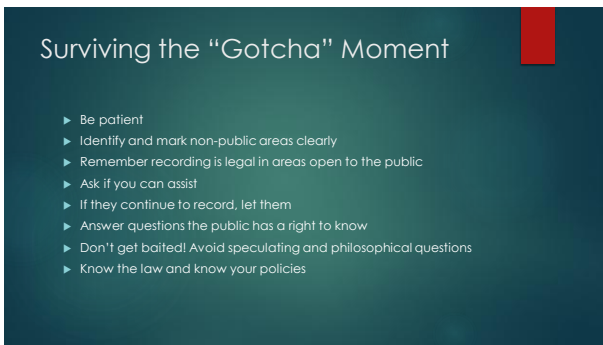
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### Rule 30: Media Guidelines

- ▶ Coverage means any recording or broadcasting of a court proceeding by the media using television, radio, photographic, or recording equipment.
- ▶ Notification must be made in writing to the presiding judge at least two days beforehand.
- ▶ Prohibitions & Limitations are up to the presiding judge and includes maintaining decorum, safety, ensuring fair administration of justice. Evidentiary hearing required.



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### Bond Lowered for Memphis Daycare Worker

February 26, 2024



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### Denise Harris

Judicial Assistant  
Shelby County Criminal Court

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## Rule 30: Media Guidelines



**Media Equipment & Personnel:** no more than two TV cameras, two photographers, and one audio system



**Pooling:** the media selects a representative to provide video/audio to everyone else. Also a liaison.



**Audio Pickup:** Use what you have! Any media microphones not built into their camera must be approved by the judge and cannot pick up bench or side bar dialogue.



**Location of Equipment/Personnel:** The judge decides where media can locate to cover the proceeding without disruption

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## Example: David Swift Murder Trial June 2024



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### But wait, what if...

The proceeding is **virtual**?

The media asks to **livestream**?

The media asks to bring **digital devices** in the courtroom?

The media is **disrupting court** with their coverage?

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Clear and upfront communication will greatly reduce chaos and last-minute decision making

Media Advisories

Media Guideline Documents

Frequent reminders

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### Public Records

Tennessee Supreme Court Rule 34

*The public has the right to inspect public records maintained by the courts.*

Unless the record is expressly excepted under the Tennessee Public Records Act

Unless otherwise provided by state law

HOWEVER....

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## Public Records

Tennessee Supreme Court **Rule 34**

**Requests are subject to reasonable requirements and restrictions to:**

- Preserve the integrity of the record
- The parties' right to the record for the purpose of preparing their papers
- The courts' deliberative process, and
- The efficient operation of the courts

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## High-Profile Cases

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## High-Profile Cases

David Swift Murder Trial

► Courtney McMinn, Weakley County Clerk



Megan Boswell Murder Trial

► Bobby Russell, Sullivan County Clerk



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## High-Profile Cases

- Notifying the AOC
- Media Advisories
- On-site & Remote Support
- Tactics and best practices

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## Tips & Tricks

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## Communicating with the Media

### What to do

- ▶ Speak in open court
- ▶ Speak through orders
- ▶ Let the AOC speak for you
- ▶ Refer to local attorney
- ▶ Remain calm

### What **not** to do

- ▶ Never speak for attribution
- ▶ Never speak off the record
- ▶ Get defensive
- ▶ Speculate

**Code of Judicial Conduct:** A judge should not make public comment on the merits of a matter pending or impending in any court and should require similar restraint by court personnel subject to the judge's direction and control.

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**In one word, how would you now describe your approach to interacting with the media?**

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