

# IN THE SUPREME COURT OF TEXAS

Misc. Docket No. 93-0002

---

## ADOPTION OF RULES FOR RECORDING AND BROADCASTING COURT PROCEEDINGS IN THE CIVIL DISTRICT COURTS OF HARRIS COUNTY

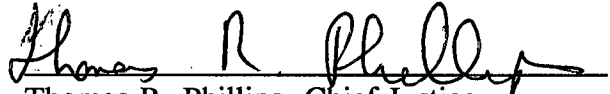
---

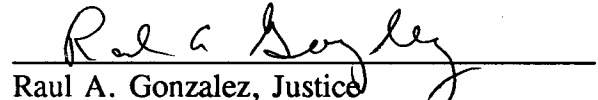
### **ORDERED:**

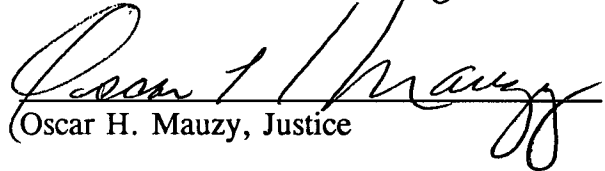
At the request of the civil district courts of Harris County, the attached rules are adopted governing the recording and broadcasting of civil proceedings in those courts. TEX. R. CIV. P. 18c; TEX. R. APP. P. 21.


This Order shall be recorded in the minutes of the civil district courts of Harris County.

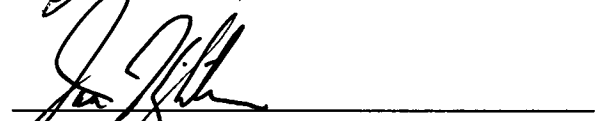
SIGNED AND ENTERED this 17<sup>th</sup> day of September, 1992.

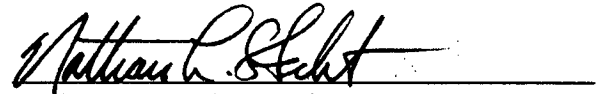
  
Thomas R. Phillips, Chief Justice

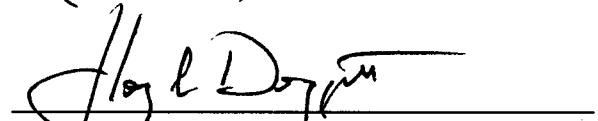
  
Raul A. Gonzalez, Justice

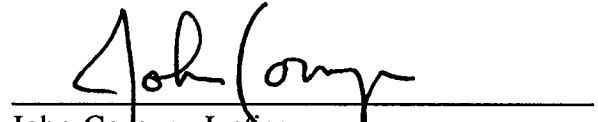
  
Oscar H. Mauzy, Justice

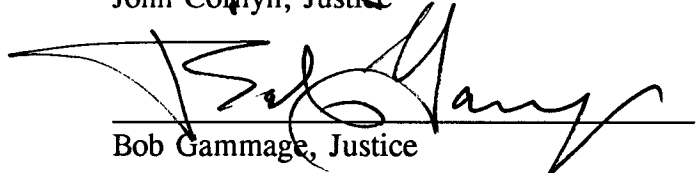
  
Eugene A. Cook, Justice

  
Jack Hightower, Justice

  
Nathan L. Hecht, Justice

  
Lloyd Doggett, Justice

  
John Cornyn, Justice

  
Bob Gammage, Justice

**RULES GOVERNING THE RECORDING AND  
BROADCASTING OF COURT PROCEEDINGS IN  
THE CIVIL DISTRICT COURTS OF HARRIS COUNTY**

Pursuant to Rule 18c(a) of the Texas Rules of Civil Procedure, the following rules govern the recording and broadcasting of court proceedings in the civil district courts of Harris County.

**1. Policy.** The policy of these rules is to allow electronic media coverage of public civil court proceedings to facilitate the free flow of information to the public concerning the judicial system and to foster better public understanding about the administration of justice. These rules are to be construed to provide the greatest access possible while at the same time maintaining the dignity, decorum and impartiality of the court proceeding.

**2. Definitions.** Certain terms are defined for purposes of these rules as follows.

**2.1.** "Court" means the particular judge or master who is presiding over the proceeding.

**2.2.** "Electronic media coverage" means any recording or broadcasting of court proceedings by the media using television, radio, photographic or recording equipment.

**2.3.** "Media" or "media agency" means any person or organization engaging in news gathering or reporting and includes any newspaper, radio or television station or network, news service, magazine, trade paper, in-house publication, professional journal, or other news reporting or news gathering agency.

**3. Electronic media coverage permitted.**

**3.1.** Unless an objection is sustained pursuant to rule 3.2, recording or broadcasting of court proceedings by the media is allowed in the courtrooms of the Civil Trial Division of the Harris County District Courts, subject to the standards and prohibitions in these rules.

**3.2** Objections to electronic media coverage should not be conclusory but should state the specific and demonstrable injury alleged to result from the recording or broadcasting of the court proceeding. Objections to electronic media coverage may be sustained only upon a showing of specific and demonstrable injury that outweighs the policy of media access stated in rule 1. If the court denies coverage, it shall set forth in a written order the findings upon which such denial is based.

**4. Electronic media coverage prohibited.**

**4.1.** Electronic media coverage of proceedings held in chambers, proceedings closed to the public, jury selection, and jury deliberation is prohibited.

**4.2.** Conferences between an attorney and client, witness or aide, between attorneys, or between counsel and the court at the bench shall not be recorded or received by sound equipment.

**4.3.** The restrictions and prohibitions in these rules may be waived by the express consent of the parties and all affected persons, with the approval of the court.

**5. Equipment and personnel.** The court may require media personnel to demonstrate that proposed equipment complies with these rules, and may exclude from the courtroom any media person who fails to comply with these rules. The court may specify the placement of media personnel and equipment to permit reasonable coverage without disruption to the proceedings. Unless the court in its discretion and for good cause orders otherwise, the following standards apply to the placement and operation of media equipment:

**5.1.** One television camera, one audio recording machine, and one still photographer are permitted. In appropriate circumstances, the court in its discretion may allow an unmanned second camera into the courtroom.

**5.2.** Equipment shall not produce distracting sound or light. Signal lights or devices which show when equipment is operating shall not be visible. Moving lights, flash attachments, or sudden lighting changes shall not be used.

**5.3.** Existing courtroom sound and lighting systems shall be used without modification unless the court specifically approves modification.

**5.4.** Operators shall not move equipment while the court is in session, or otherwise cause a distraction. All equipment shall be in place in advance of the commencement of the proceeding or session that is the subject of the coverage.

**5.5.** Media personnel operating outside the courtroom shall not create a distraction and shall withdraw whenever necessary to avoid restricting movement of persons passing through the courtroom door.

**5.6.** Media logos or proprietary trademarks shall not be displayed on cameras, microphones, other equipment used in court, or clothing or nametags on personnel.

**6. Delay of proceedings.** No proceeding or session will be delayed or continued for the sole purpose of allowing media coverage. Upon request, the court will inform media

agencies of settings and will attempt to make the courtroom available in advance for the purpose of installing equipment.

**7. Pooling.** If more than one media agency of one type wish to cover a proceeding or session, they shall make pool arrangements. If they are unable to agree, the court may deny all electronic media coverage by that type of media agency, or may designate one agency or one representative as pool coordinator, specifying such other conditions of pool coverage as may be necessary.

**8. Official record.** Films, videotapes, photographs or audio reproductions made in court proceedings shall not be considered part of the official court record.

**9. Enforcement.** A violation of these rules by the electronic media may be sanctioned by appropriate measures, including, without limitation, barring the particular person or agency from access to future electronic media coverage of proceedings in that courtroom for a defined period of time.