

POLICY REGARDING ACCESS TO RUSSELL COUNTY COURTHOUSE

The Russell County Courthouse is owned and operated by the Russell County Commission to accomplish the business of the Russell County Commission on behalf of the citizens of Russell County, Alabama. While the First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects the right to gather information about what public officials do on public property, and specifically a right to record matters of public interest,¹ like all First Amendment protections, this right is “subject to reasonable time, manner and place restrictions,” and the First Amendment does not automatically open property to the public just because it is owned by the government.”² The Russell County Commission has the power to preserve the property under its control for the use to which it is lawfully dedicated.³

The Russell County Courthouse is a government workplace and the physical characteristics of the Courthouse make it incompatible with noise, a crowd, disruptive behavior or expressive activity. The Russell County Commission may, therefore, exercise its right to control access to its workplace and to avoid interruptions to the performance of the duties of its employees.⁴ Accordingly, and to protect the safety and well-being of the employees working in the Russell County Courthouse, the Russell County Commission on February 28, 2024, has adopted the following policies.

1. All areas of the Russell County Courthouse besides the Russell County Commission Chambers are a limited public forum.
2. All citizens have the right to enter the Russell County Courthouse during operating hours to conduct official business.
3. Persons should not loiter on the property of the Russell County Courthouse.
4. Filming, videoing, photographing, livestreaming, or interactive messaging employees of the Russell County Commission as they perform their job duties is not allowed without the consent of those being filmed, videoed, or photographed.⁵
5. Filming, videoing, photographing, livestreaming, or interactive messaging citizens who are conducting business in the Russell County Courthouse is not allowed without the consent of those being filmed, videoed, or photographed.⁶
6. To avoid any disruption in ingress and egress, no one has the right to demonstrate, protest, or gather inside the Russell County Courthouse or on the sidewalks leading into the building.

¹ Smith v. City of Cumming, 212 F. 3d 1332, 1333 (11th Cir. 2000)

² Bloedorn v. Grube, 631 F. 3d 1218, 1230 (11th Cir. 2011)

³ Perry Educ. Ass’n v. Perry Loc. Educators’ Ass’n, 460 U.S. 37, 46 (1983)

⁴ Cornelius v. NAACP Legal Def. & Fund, Inc., 473 U.S. 788, 805-806 (1985)

⁵ Law enforcement activities are exempted from this preclusion.

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