

USA v. Slager: Media Information

Updated March 16, 2017

The following is a “plain-English” guide to media policies and accommodations for the USA v. Slager trial. All information is subject to change. An updated notice will be included in this document to ensure you have the most current version.

1) What resources should you be familiar with?

Please familiarize yourself with the following resources:

- a. [Decorum Order](#). This order provides guidelines to the public and media, as well as scheduling and other information.
- b. [Cases of Interest Page](#). This provides information about USA v. Slager.
- c. **PACER**. Most case docket entries will be available only via PACER, the federal Judiciary’s document access service. To learn more, or to open an account, visit www.pacer.gov.
- d. **Media access email**. Questions for the court should be sent to media@scd.uscourts.gov.

2) How will media registration work?

- a. **Media registration** is required, and journalists must wear court-issued badges to receive special media access privileges. See [Media Registration page](#) to apply.
- b. **Badge pickup**. An email/text alert will confirm when badge-pickup is ready to start. Currently, plans are for pickup to begin in the Clerk’s Office of the federal courthouse in Charleston, in the week before trial starts on May 15.
- c. **Registration timetable**. To ensure receipt of a badge by May 15, media are strongly encouraged to apply by May 8. However, registration will continue, and badges will be produced, for the duration of the trial.

3) What rules are mandatory?

The following rules are mandatory. Failure to follow them may lead to court-imposed sanctions, including loss of media privileges.

- a. **Electronic recording is prohibited** anywhere inside the courthouse, including with cellphones.
- b. **Contact with jurors—as well as any photo, video or other depiction of jurors**—is forbidden during trial, at any location.
- c. **Liquids may not be brought** through the security line into the courthouse.
- d. **Court Security Officers** and other safety personnel must be obeyed.
- e. **The Decorum Order**, and all other court directives, must be followed.
- f. **Entry paths to the courthouse** or court property may not be blocked.

4) Media access and other privileges: Essential information

- a. **Courthouse hours.** The courthouse will open at 8:00 a.m. on trial days and remain open until 6 p.m.
- b. **Media Overflow Room hours.** Unless otherwise ordered, Courtroom 5, the Media Overflow Room, will open one hour before the start of trial (generally at 8:30 a.m.), and remain open for one hour after the end of court proceedings, or until 6 p.m. , whichever is later.
- c. **Electronic Gear.** Journalists with court-issued media badges may bring laptops, tablets, and cellphones through security lines. However, once inside the courthouse, they may use these devices only in the Media Overflow Room (Courtroom 5), and subject to these conditions:
 - i. Recording functions (audio, video, and photo) may not be used at any time, for any reason.
 - ii. Journalists may use phones to talk with editors, sources, etc.
 - iii. All text-keyboard functions are permitted. Journalists may take notes, send texts and tweets, and transmit articles for publication, including blog entries.
 - iv. No internet connection will be provided. Journalists must bring their own my-fi or personal hot spot devices.
 - v. The media may use all available electrical sockets, except those in the judge’s bench and deputy clerk station.
- d. **Food inside courthouse.** Journalists with court-issued media badges may bring food through security lines and eat inside the Media Overflow Room (Courtroom 5), subject to these conditions:
 - i. To assist visual security inspection, food should be sealed in a transparent plastic bag or clear container.
 - ii. To assist courtroom hygiene, recently cooked food must be eaten outside the courthouse; only bring in unheated food that does not cast a strong odor.
 - iii. Food may be eaten only inside Courtroom 5.
 - iv. Leftovers, spills, etc., must be cleaned up immediately.
 - v. Water is available in water coolers and may be brought into the Media Overflow Room. Other beverages may be purchased in a courthouse vending machine, located in the basement level.
 - vi. Important note: These food rules are an exception to normal court policy, and may be revoked if the guidelines aren’t observed.
- e. **Electronic interviews and broadcasts** conducted on courthouse property during business hours must be done in the Garden area. Further details are in Section 9.
- f. **Trial schedule.** Email/text advisories will be sent, and a notice posted online, regarding significant changes to the trial schedule.

5) How will the closed-circuit television work?

Closed-circuit video and audio will be available in Courtroom 5 (the media room). The court will use a multi-camera system that permits close-up views of the judge and witness stand, and a frontal view of the lectern and defense table. In addition, exhibits presented electronically to the jury will be shown on the closed-circuit screen.

6) Rules for Media Overflow Room (Courtroom 5)

All media may seek to enter Courtroom 5, the Media Overflow Room.

- a. Journalists may sit at all tables in the open courtroom, in juror seats, and in the public gallery benches. They may not sit in any part of the judge's bench, including where the courtroom deputy clerk sits, or in the witness stand.
- b. In the event of overcrowding, journalists with designated priority badges will be given preference for seating at attorneys' tables and juror seats, and for remaining in the media room should it reach capacity. All other journalists may use Courtroom 5 on a space-available basis.
- c. Journalists in Courtroom 5 must follow all rules under Item 3, and Items 4b, 4c, 4d, and 4e.
- d. As a reminder, it is illegal to record federal criminal trial proceedings, or closed-circuit TV or audio transmissions. Journalists speaking by telephone during the trial must ensure that their calls are not being recorded.
- e. A Court Security Officer will be in the media room to ensure compliance with court rules, including the [USA v. Slager Decorum Order](#).
- f. Media credentials may be revoked for violations of any media room or other court rules.

7) Public Overflow Room Rules

If the public overflow room (Courtroom 4) is open, Media may sit in the room but they may not bring or use electronic equipment there.

8) Outdoor rules

- a. During courthouse hours, electronic recording and live broadcasting on courthouse property will be confined to the Garden area on Meeting Street.
 - i. The Garden will be open from 8:00 am to 7:30 pm.
- b. Journalists may not block courthouse doors or gate entrances on Meeting and Broad streets.
- c. Security responsibilities outside the courthouse and surrounding sidewalks and streets will be shared among the Federal Protective Service, U.S. Marshals Service and Court Security

Officers, and the Charleston Police Department.

- d. The Garden area will have spaces for TV crews. An area at the far end of the Garden has been set aside for interviews.
 - i. Organizations seeking to reserve a space in the Garden should contact media@scd.uscourts.gov.
 - ii. As a condition of seeking a reservation, please confirm that your organization will use your space daily during the trial.
 - iii. Reservations will be reassigned if an organization does not use the space on a daily basis.
- e. Cameras may be set up and used on the Meeting Street sidewalk outside the court when the Garden is closed. However, cameras and reporters may not occupy the space immediately at the court property entrance.

9) Media vehicles

- a. Media vehicles on Meeting Street and Broad Street are being managed by the Charleston Police Department. Additional security for the courthouse property perimeter will be provided by the Federal Protective Service.
- b. The following regulations are in accordance with Charleston PD guidance:
 - i. All parking meters on both sides of Meeting Street, between the Garden and Broad Street, will be hooded for the duration of the trial.
 - ii. Vehicles may remain parked overnight from Sunday at 8 pm until Saturday at 5 pm. Vehicles must be cleared for the remaining hours to accommodate church traffic.
- c. Cables generally may be laid down between media trucks and cameras in the Garden. But they must be secured to protect pedestrians, and Federal Protective Service and other safety personnel may in specific cases order the removal of cables.

10) Can you see evidence exhibits during trial?

- a. Document, photo and video exhibits will be posted on the District of South Carolina website by the morning after they are admitted into evidence. To find the exhibits link, visit [the USA v. Slager Cases of Interest page](#). Media will be notified of any delays caused by technical or other difficulties.
- b. Links to new exhibits also will be sent to registered media by email and text.
- c. Physical exhibits may be seen at the end of the trial day. To see a physical exhibit, ask to speak with the courtroom deputy clerk.

11) Media alerts and inquiries

- a. All media, at time of registration, may request update alerts via email, text or both.
- b. Media alerts will be sent to advise registered media of schedule changes and new releases of trial exhibits. Additional media alerts will be sent as warranted.

12) After the trial

- a. Electronic interviews following the trial should be conducted in the designated Garden area.
- b. Once the jury is excused, reporters may seek to interview jurors. However, jurors are not required to answer questions, and reporters are expected to cease any further contact if a juror declines to be interviewed.