

Courtroom devices get different state treatments

Editor's note: This is a preview of a story that will appear in the next print issue of Gateway Journalism Review.

While almost all state trial courts allow some level of still and video camera coverage of court proceedings, the rules on usage of modern communications devices and techniques – blogging, tweeting, texting and emailing using cellphones, tablets and other devices – are a wild patchwork of policies which vary from state to state, courthouse to courthouse, and often even courtroom to courtroom.

An example of this is in two wildly diverging policies adopted in late 2012 in Kansas and Illinois' Cook County. In mid-October, the Kansas Supreme Court amended the state's courts rules to explicitly permit tweeting and texting from courtrooms, becoming one of only a handful of states that explicitly allow such coverage of their courts. In mid-December, meanwhile, Cook County chief judge Timothy Evans issued an order barring devices "capable of connecting to the Internet or making audio or video recordings" from all of the county's courthouses where criminal matters are heard, effective Jan. 15.