

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-15

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, FLORIDA, REGULATING PUBLIC ACCESS TO ENCLOSED FACILITIES OWNED, CONTROLLED, OR LEASED BY WASHINGTON COUNTY; PROVIDING FOR DESIGNATION OF PUBLIC FORUM AREAS; REGULATING RECORDING ACTIVITIES; AUTHORIZING ENFORCEMENT AND TRESPASS WARNINGS; PROVIDING FOR PROHIBITED CONDUCT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

SECTION 1. TITLE.

This ordinance shall be known as the "Washington County Public Access Ordinance."

SECTION 2. CLASSIFICATION OF FACILITIES.

Public access to areas within enclosed facilities owned, controlled, or leased by Washington County shall be subject to different regulations and restrictions depending upon whether they are classified as:

- a. Designated Public Forum;
- b. Limited Designated Public Forum; or
- c. Non-Public Forum.

Such classification shall be based upon the intended use of the particular area.

SECTION 3. DEFINITIONS.

For the purposes of this ordinance:

- a. County Government means Washington County and its five (5) constitutional officers as defined in Section 1, Article VIII, Florida Constitution.
- b. County Employees means the employees of Washington County and its five (5) constitutional officers as defined in Section 1, Article VIII, Florida Constitution.
- c. Designated Public Forum means the Board of County Commissioners meeting room at the Washington County Government Complex, public meeting rooms, and other locations in which a public meeting is being held pursuant to a public notice issued by County Government. "Public Meeting" shall include those times in which the public is allowed access to public meeting room(s).
- d. Limited Designated Public Forum means areas that are open to the public while engaging in legitimate business with County officers or employees. All areas other than designated

public forums and non-public forums are hereby designated as limited public forums, and only persons who are present to engage in legitimate public business with County employees or officers shall be authorized.

e. Non-Public Forum means areas intended primarily for the use of County employees or officers in the conduct of their business, including but not limited to:

i. The County Commission meeting room and public conference rooms except when a duly noticed public meeting is being conducted therein.

ii. All County employee work areas designated by signage as work areas. Members of the public are prohibited from entering such areas without being escorted by a County employee.

SECTION 4. DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT.

Any person who engages in conduct that disrupts the work of County Government shall be deemed no longer present for legitimate public business and may be treated as an unauthorized person.

SECTION 5. RESTRICTIONS ON RECORDING.

Except within the County Commission meeting room or other locations in which a public meeting is being conducted pursuant to a public notice issued by County Government, it shall be unlawful to record video and/or sound within County-owned, controlled, or leased property without the consent of all persons whose voice or image is being recorded.

Anyone who refuses to cease such unauthorized recording after being advised of the prohibition shall be deemed to have disrupted the work of County Government and may be treated as an unauthorized person subject to removal.

SECTION 6. AUTHORITY TO REMOVE UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS.

The County Administrator (or such other title given by Washington County to its chief administrative employee) and his/her designees are authorized to:

a. Verbally request any unauthorized person, including persons who refuse to cease unconsented recording, to immediately leave the premises.

b. Request law enforcement assistance to remove such persons as trespassers and to issue trespass warnings pursuant to Sections 810.08 and 810.09, Florida Statutes.

SECTION 7. DESIGNATION OF FORUM AREAS.

The County Administrator (or such person as designated by the Board of County Commissioners) is authorized to determine which areas of County-owned, controlled, or leased facilities are designated as "designated public forum," "limited designated public forum," or "non-public forum," and to separate such areas by use of physical barriers, signage, and other reasonable measures to preserve security, privacy, and order.

SECTION 8. PROHIBITED CONDUCT.

In addition to the foregoing, the following conduct is prohibited within any facility owned, controlled, or leased by Washington County:

- a. Engaging in any conduct prohibited by federal, state, or local law.
- b. Possessing any weapon, except as specifically permitted by law.
- c. Smoking, vaping, or use of other tobacco products.
- d. Disruptive, harassing, or unsafe behavior, including interference with County employees or officials in the performance of their duties.
- e. Abusive or harassing behavior, including obscene language, gestures, or graphics.
- f. Blocking entrances, exits, or otherwise interfering with the provision of public services.
- g. Entering or remaining in non-public areas without authorization.
- h. Disrupting County business, events, or authorized activities.
- i. Leaving unattended packages, backpacks, luggage, or similar items (which may be immediately confiscated).
- j. Sleeping or lying down in public areas not designated for such use.
- k. Audio or video recording in violation of Section 5 of this ordinance.

SECTION 9. SEVERABILITY.

If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, or phrase of this ordinance is held to be invalid or unconstitutional, such decision shall not affect the remaining portions of this ordinance.

SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.

This ordinance shall take effect upon filing with the Florida Department of State.

ADOPTED by the Board of County Commissioners of Washington County, Florida, this the 13th day of November, 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, FLORIDA

BY:

David Pettit
Chairman

ATTEST

Donna Bell
Clerk of the Circuit Court