



Courtroom Decorum

To prevent disruption and distraction, to preserve decorum, and to promote a fair and effective forum for litigants inside the courtroom, the Court is prohibiting clothing or signs designed to convey support for either side of the argument. Only attorneys speak. The public is not allowed to comment inside the courtroom.

A courtroom "is not a debate hall or a gathering place for the public to exchange ideas: it is a forum for adjudicating the rights and duties of litigants." *Kelly v. Mun. Court of Marion Cty.*, 852 F. Supp. 724, 735 (S.D. Ind. 1994). Unlike discourse in a public forum, "discussions that occur in court are highly regulated by the rules of evidence and procedure." *Id.* And courts have inherent authority "to impose silence, respect, and decorum, in their presence." *Chambers v. NASCO, Inc.*, 501 U.S. 32, 43 (1991) (quoting *Anderson v. Dunn*, 6 Wheat. 204, 227, 5 L. Ed. 242 (1821)). These powers are "governed not by rule or statute but by the control necessarily vested in courts to manage their own affairs so as to achieve the orderly and expeditious disposition of cases." *Link v. Wabash R. Co.*, 370 U.S. 626, 630–631, 82 S.Ct. 1386, 1388–1389, 8 L.Ed.2d 734 (1962).

For these reasons, a courtroom is a "nonpublic forum" where the First Amendment allows "standard time, place, and manner" limitations. *Sefleck v. Gardner*, 164 F.3d 370, 373 (7th Cir. 1998). Those limits permit "a viewpoint-neutral exclusion of speakers who would disrupt a nonpublic forum and hinder its effectiveness for its intended purpose." *Cornelius v. NAACP Legal Def. & Educ. Fund, Inc.* 473 U.S. 788, 811 (1986). For example, prohibiting a lawyer from wearing a political button inside the courtroom was not a violation of the *First Amendment*. *Berner v. Delahanty*, 937 F. Supp. 62, 63 (D. Me. 1996).
