

Florida Supreme Court Approves New Standard Jury Instructions in Civil Cases

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Recently, the Florida Supreme Court approved new jury instructions that were jointly proposed by the Supreme Court Committees on Standard Jury Instructions in Civil and Criminal Cases. *See In re Standard Jury Instructions*, Case No. SC10-51, 2010 WL 4117070 (Fla. Oct. 21, 2010). These new instructions aim to minimize problems relating to jurors engaging in electronic communications, research, or the use of technology during pending cases.

In their joint report to the Florida Supreme Court proposing the new instructions, the Committees identified the acute and growing problems associated with jurors' use of technology:

Many individuals called for jury service, especially younger jurors, have grown up with the Internet. These potential jurors may consider constant communication through cell phones, Blackberries, and other devices to be a normal part of everyday life. For example, jurors in other states have caused problems by twittering about the trial and posting messages about the trial on social networking websites like Facebook or MySpace. Some jurors have even used these methods to describe the case to others and ask for advice on how to decide the case.

The new jury instructions should be read, as parts of existing instructions, before *voir dire*, before opening statements, and before jury deliberations.

If you have any questions regarding these new jury instructions, please contact [Wendy F. Lumish](#) or [Joseph H. Lang, Jr.](#) in the Appellate Practice & Trial Support Group.

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