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## **Scuffle with texting teen leaves sheriff's deputy with broken leg**

### **Incident touches off plans to review cell phone use in Arundel courthouses**

By Andrea F. Siegel

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An Anne Arundel County deputy sheriff's leg was broken in a courtroom scuffle with a teen who deputies said refused to stop texting on his cell phone despite warnings that its use was banned in court.

The incident is prompting officials to look again at the court's cell phone policy, which generally allows people to take cell phones into the Circuit Court building and use them everywhere except courtrooms. A poster-size notice in courtrooms tells people to turn off their phones.

On Wednesday, deputies repeatedly told a person in the courtroom to put away his phone, but he refused and profanely started to tell off a deputy, Sheriff Ronald S. Bateman said.

Deputy Brian Schwab told the man he was under arrest and grabbed his clothing; his brother, Doug Schwab, also a deputy, went toward the man, Bateman said. When the man pushed away from Brian Schwab, all three people tumbled to the floor, and Brian Schwab's leg was broken in the ensuing struggle, Bateman said.

Deputies arrested Demonte T. Jones, 18, of the 4200 block of Prudence St. in Baltimore, and charged him with failing to obey the deputies' order, disorderly conduct, assault on a law enforcement officer and two related counts. Initially held at the county jail in lieu of \$100,000 bail, he was released on recognizance Thursday, court records show.

Cell phone policies vary from court to court in Maryland.

Bateman, who has asked the Maryland Association of Sheriffs to survey courthouse policies statewide, said he will work with other court officials to re-examine the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court policy.

He said he is concerned about safety issues - using a cell phone to photograph witnesses or communicate from the courtroom to witnesses. But he

said, a ban on all cell phones would pose difficulties for the many courthouse visitors who use mass transit or park a distance from the building, as well as for his office, which holds visitors' items if they cannot be taken into the courthouse - typically knives.

Circuit Court Administrator Robert G. Wallace said the court will probably take a fresh look at its policy, but doubts a full-blown ban would be adopted, largely because it would be inconvenient to visitors and difficult to manage.

Howard County Circuit Court, for example, does not allow visitors to carry cell phones with cameras into the building. It does allow cell phones without cameras, but they must be turned off.

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