

## **SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR COURT OFFICIALS ON INTERACTING WITH SOVEREIGN CITIZENS**

UNC School of Government  
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1. Be aware of who sovereign citizens are and be alert to when they appear in your office or court
  - Be alert to the buzz words they use when speaking and include in documents
  - Be aware of the kinds of documents they attempt to file
  - Be sure that people who work in the courthouse can recognize when they are dealing with sovereign citizens
  - When you become aware that you are dealing with a sovereign citizen communicate with others in the courthouse so that they also know
  
2. Understand sovereign citizens' point of view and their potential danger
  - They may seem like harmless cranks and most will not present any danger
  - But understand that the underlying premise of their beliefs is that neither you nor any other court official has legitimate authority over them
  - If they become too frustrated, they may decide to take matters into their own hands, per their "common law" rights
  
3. Do not try to argue with or otherwise engage sovereign citizens
  - Of course, always be courteous to everyone, but do not think that you are going to change the mind of a sovereign citizen by debating them
  - Protracted discussion with a sovereign citizen about their views, particularly in a courtroom, which may make it appear that their views are legitimate, will encourage them to think they are right
  
4. Prepare for adequate security
  - Alert the sheriff or bailiffs if you know a sovereign citizen will be appearing in court
  - Consider whether any additional security is needed
  - Review your procedures for being able to alert law enforcement when a problem arises
  - Have a code word or other means to alert other court officials or employees who are nearby if you become worried
  
5. Do not sign orders blindly
  - A sovereign citizen may present a "no contact" order or similar regular sounding document for routine signing
  - Be sure you understand any document you are asked to sign, and do not sign a false or fictitious document
  
6. As a judge:
  - Do not automatically disqualify yourself just because a sovereign citizen files a recusal motion right before a hearing

- Do not believe that you must hold a hearing on every motion filed, even if it is nonsensical
  - Do not allow the sovereign citizen to bring their own court reporter to the proceeding
  - Consider in advance how you will respond if a sovereign citizen starts talking gibberish in your court
  - Do not try to persuade the sovereign citizen how their views are wrong
  - Do not feel like you have to allow a sovereign citizen talk on and on
  - Be clear, direct and concise in your rulings
  - Review and understand your contempt authority and be prepared to use it if necessary
  - Have a bailiff or other security available
  - Be aware that in exceptional cases the court may enter a gatekeeper order (prefiling injunction) to stop a persistent abuser from filing frivolous and irrelevant documents
  - Before entering such an order, review the nature of a gatekeeper order, the circumstances in which it may be issued, the kinds of findings that need to be included, and the kinds of restrictions that may be placed on access to the court
7. Do not be surprised if you are sued
- It is common for sovereign citizens to file numerous frivolous lawsuits against court officials who do not see things their way
  - Save all documents you receive, including the envelopes in which they were sent
  - Notify Pamela Best or Amy Funderburk at the AOC that you have been sued and forward the documents to them
  - Be aware that a sovereign citizen also may attempt to file liens against you, and be aware that effective December 1, 2012, a new statute, GS 14-118.6 makes it a class I felony to knowingly present for filing a false lien against the property of a public officer based on that person's performance of official duties, as well as authorizing the register of deeds to reject such filing

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