

Eight Senators snuck Apple Watches into impeachment hearings despite electronics ban

Eight senators have been spotted wearing Apple Watches to President Trump's impeachment trial, seemingly breaking the chamber's ban on electronics during the proceedings. The apparent violations were spotted by *Roll Call*, which saw Apple Watches on the wrists of six Republican senators and two Democratic senators, as well as an aide to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell.

Under rules published last week, senators are prohibited from bringing any electronics into the chamber. "No use of phones or electronic devices will be allowed in the Chamber. All electronics should be left in the Cloakroom in the storage provided," the rules read.

No specific reason was given for the ban – whether it's a concern about senators recording private conversations, causing a commotion on social media, or just being distracted during an important proceeding. Apple Watches include messaging and recording features, and newer models can come with LTE to keep users connected even when there's no Wi-Fi. They're a lot harder to tweet from and read emails on than a smartphone, though.

Senator Ted Cruz – or at least, his social media manager – mocked the ban, tweeting an image of an iPhone that says "come and take it" after he was accused of tweeting during the proceedings. But Cruz hasn't been spotted with an iPhone on

the Senate floor, and a Cruz spokesperson later confirmed to *The Verge* that he didn't bring his phone onto the Senate floor.

Taking photos, videos, or audio recordings has been banned in the House of Representatives since 2017, with violators paying up to a \$2,500 fine starting on their second offense. The Senate's ban is broader than that, prohibiting electronics even when they're not in use. But it doesn't appear to have implemented a fine like in the House, so it may be trickier to enforce – especially for something as low profile as a smartwatch.

Update, 8:35 PM ET: Added confirmation from a spokesperson for Sen. Cruz that he did not bring his phone onto the floor.

<https://www.theverge.com/2020/1/21/21075895/senate-apple-watch-trump-impeachment-trial-electronics-ban>