

Courtroom scuffle over texting ends with broken leg for deputy

A scuffle in Anne Arundel Circuit Court Wednesday that started with a request for a man to stop messaging on his mobile phone ended with a broken leg for a sheriff's deputy, authorities say.

According to Anne Arundel Sheriff Ron Bateman, Demonte T. Jones, 18, of Baltimore, was sitting in the courtroom audience waiting for an acquaintance's hearing to start. He was twice asked by deputies to stop messaging on his phone, as a posted sign also directed. Jones kept the phone in hand rather than stash it in a pocket, Bateman said.

Deputy Brian Schwaab ordered Jones out of the courtroom, where a judge was on the bench between breaks in proceedings. Jones refused, stood up and shouted an epithet, Bateman said.

Schwaab told Jones he was under arrest and grabbed his clothes, said Bateman. Jones pushed away, drawing the attention of Deputy Doug Schwaab, brother of Brian, the sheriff said. The Schwaabs and Jones scuffled, fell to the courtroom floor and, in the process, Bateman said, Brian Schwaab's leg was broken below the knee.

Jones and Brian Schwaab were treated and released from Anne Arundel Medical Center. Jones is out on bond and charged with assault on a law enforcement officer, resisting arrest and three other offenses.

"This doesn't really come up that often and I don't want to overreact because of some disrespectful little punk," said Bateman.

The sheriff said he is mulling whether judges could warn that anyone flouting the cell phone rules would risk being held in contempt and face a fine. "That could be enough to deter most people," Bateman said.

-- *Mary Pat Flaherty*