

## Calendar No. 361

111TH CONGRESS  
2D SESSION**S. 657**

To provide for media coverage of Federal court proceedings.

## IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 19, 2009

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Mr. SCHUMER, Mr. LEAHY, Mr. SPECTER, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. FEINGOLD, Mr. CORNYN, Mr. DURBIN, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, and Mr. KAUFMAN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

APRIL 29, 2010

Reported by Mr. LEAHY, without amendment

**A BILL**

To provide for media coverage of Federal court proceedings.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*  
 2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Sunshine in the Court-  
 5 room Act of 2009”.

6 **SEC. 2. FEDERAL APPELLATE AND DISTRICT COURTS.**

7 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

1           (1) PRESIDING JUDGE.—The term “presiding  
2       judge” means the judge presiding over the court  
3       proceeding concerned. In proceedings in which more  
4       than 1 judge participates, the presiding judge shall  
5       be the senior active judge so participating or, in the  
6       case of a circuit court of appeals, the senior active  
7       circuit judge so participating, except that—

8           (A) in en banc sittings of any United  
9       States circuit court of appeals, the presiding  
10      judge shall be the chief judge of the circuit  
11      whenever the chief judge participates; and

12          (B) in en banc sittings of the Supreme  
13      Court of the United States, the presiding judge  
14      shall be the Chief Justice whenever the Chief  
15      Justice participates.

16          (2) APPELLATE COURT OF THE UNITED  
17      STATES.—The term “appellate court of the United  
18      States” means any United States circuit court of ap-  
19      peals and the Supreme Court of the United States.

20      (b) AUTHORITY OF PRESIDING JUDGE TO ALLOW  
21      MEDIA COVERAGE OF COURT PROCEEDINGS.—

22          (1) AUTHORITY OF APPELLATE COURTS.—

23              (A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided  
24      under subparagraph (B), the presiding judge of  
25      an appellate court of the United States may, at

1 the discretion of that judge, permit the  
2 photographing, electronic recording, broad-  
3 casting, or televising to the public of any court  
4 proceeding over which that judge presides.

5 (B) EXCEPTION.—The presiding judge  
6 shall not permit any action under subparagraph  
7 (A), if—

8 (i) in the case of a proceeding involv-  
9 ing only the presiding judge, that judge de-  
10 termines the action would constitute a vio-  
11 lation of the due process rights of any  
12 party; or

13 (ii) in the case of a proceeding involv-  
14 ing the participation of more than 1 judge,  
15 a majority of the judges participating de-  
16 termine that the action would constitute a  
17 violation of the due process rights of any  
18 party.

19 (2) AUTHORITY OF DISTRICT COURTS.—

20 (A) IN GENERAL.—

21 (i) AUTHORITY.—Notwithstanding  
22 any other provision of law, except as pro-  
23 vided under clause (iii), the presiding judge  
24 of a district court of the United States  
25 may, at the discretion of that judge, per-

mit the photographing, electronic recording, broadcasting, or televising to the public of any court proceeding over which that judge presides.

(ii) OBSCURING OF WITNESSES.—Except as provided under clause (iii)—

(I) upon the request of any witness (other than a party) in a trial proceeding, the court shall order the face and voice of the witness to be disguised or otherwise obscured in such manner as to render the witness unrecognizable to the broadcast audience of the trial proceeding; and

(II) the presiding judge in a trial proceeding shall inform each witness who is not a party that the witness has the right to request the image and voice of that witness to be obscured during the witness' testimony.

(iii) EXCEPTION.—The presiding judge shall not permit any action under this subparagraph—

(I) if that judge determines the action would constitute a violation of

1 the due process rights of any party;  
2 and

3 (II) until the Judicial Conference  
4 of the United States promulgates  
5 mandatory guidelines under para-  
6 graph (5).

7 (B) NO MEDIA COVERAGE OF JURORS.—  
8 The presiding judge shall not permit the  
9 photographing, electronic recording, broad-  
10 casting, or televising of any juror in a trial pro-  
11 ceeding, or of the jury selection process.

12 (C) DISCRETION OF THE JUDGE.—The  
13 presiding judge shall have the discretion to ob-  
14 scure the face and voice of an individual, if  
15 good cause is shown that the photographing,  
16 electronic recording, broadcasting, or televising  
17 of the individual would threaten—

- 18 (i) the safety of the individual;  
19 (ii) the security of the court;  
20 (iii) the integrity of future or ongoing  
21 law enforcement operations; or  
22 (iv) the interest of justice.

23 (D) SUNSET OF DISTRICT COURT AUTHOR-  
24 ITY.—The authority under this paragraph shall

1           terminate 3 years after the date of the enact-  
2           ment of this Act.

3           (3) INTERLOCUTORY APPEALS BARRED.—The  
4           decision of the presiding judge under this subsection  
5           of whether or not to permit, deny, or terminate the  
6           photographing, electronic recording, broadcasting, or  
7           televising of a court proceeding may not be chal-  
8           lenged through an interlocutory appeal.

9           (4) ADVISORY GUIDELINES.—The Judicial Con-  
10          ference of the United States may promulgate advi-  
11          sory guidelines to which a presiding judge, at the  
12          discretion of that judge, may refer in making deci-  
13          sions with respect to the management and adminis-  
14          tration of photographing, recording, broadcasting, or  
15          televising described under paragraphs (1) and (2).

16          (5) MANDATORY GUIDELINES.—Not later than  
17          6 months after the date of enactment of this Act,  
18          the Judicial Conference of the United States shall  
19          promulgate mandatory guidelines which a presiding  
20          judge is required to follow for obscuring of certain  
21          vulnerable witnesses, including crime victims, minor  
22          victims, families of victims, cooperating witnesses,  
23          undercover law enforcement officers or agents, wit-  
24          nesses subject to section 3521 of title 18, United  
25          States Code, relating to witness relocation and pro-

1       tection, or minors under the age of 18 years. The  
2       guidelines shall include procedures for determining,  
3       at the earliest practicable time in any investigation  
4       or case, which witnesses should be considered vulner-  
5       able under this section.

6           (6) PROCEDURES.—In the interests of justice  
7       and fairness, the presiding judge of the court in  
8       which media use is desired has discretion to promul-  
9       gate rules and disciplinary measures for the court-  
10      room use of any form of media or media equipment  
11      and the acquisition or distribution of any of the im-  
12      ages or sounds obtained in the courtroom. The pre-  
13      siding judge shall also have discretion to require  
14      written acknowledgment of the rules by anyone indi-  
15      vidually or on behalf of any entity before being al-  
16      lowed to acquire any images or sounds from the  
17      courtroom.

18           (7) NO BROADCAST OF CONFERENCES BE-  
19      TWEEN ATTORNEYS AND CLIENTS.—There shall be  
20      no audio pickup or broadcast of conferences which  
21      occur in a court proceeding between attorneys and  
22      their clients, between co-counsel of a client, between  
23      adverse counsel, or between counsel and the pre-  
24      siding judge, if the conferences are not part of the  
25      official record of the proceedings.

1           (8) EXPENSES.—A court may require that any  
2 accommodations to effectuate this Act be made with-  
3 out public expense.

4           (9) INHERENT AUTHORITY.—Nothing in this  
5 Act shall limit the inherent authority of a court to  
6 protect witnesses or clear the courtroom to preserve  
7 the decorum and integrity of the legal process or  
8 protect the safety of an individual.





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