

Grassley Introduces Bill to Require Televising Supreme Court Proceedings

Written by Sen Chuck Grassley
Monday, 12 December 2011 14:36

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WASHINGTON –Senator Chuck Grassley, Ranking Member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, and Senator Dick Durbin introduced legislation today to require open proceedings of the Supreme Court to be televised. <p>The <i>Cameras in the Courtroom Act of 2011</i> would require television coverage of all open sessions of the Court, unless the Court decides, by a vote of the majority of justices, that doing so would constitute a violation of the due process rights of one or more of the parties before the Court. A similar bill was approved by a bipartisan majority of the Judiciary Committee last Congress.</p> <p>In addition, on November 15, Grassley asked Chief Justice John Roberts to provide audio and video coverage of the landmark Supreme Court proceedings of the federal health care reform law. Grassley said that broadcasting the health care reform law proceedings would not only contribute to the public's understanding of America's judicial system, but provide an excellent educational opportunity on a case that has the potential to have a far reaching impact on every American</p> <p>"Nine Justices have a tremendous amount of influence on the lives of the people of this country, yet people know very little about the highest court in our country. In fact, next year, the Supreme Court will hear arguments about a law that has the potential to impact every American. Allowing cameras in the Supreme Court will help bring much needed transparency to a process that is largely unknown to the American public," Grassley said.</p> <p>The <i>Cameras in the Courtroom

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Act only applies to open sessions of the Supreme Court – sessions where members of the public are already invited to observe in person. Public scrutiny of Supreme Court proceedings will produce greater accountability, transparency, and understanding of our judicial system.

A hearing on the Cameras in the Courtroom Act will be held tomorrow in the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Administrative Oversight and the Courts. The hearing will be chaired by Senator Amy Klobuchar and will feature testimony from Iowa Supreme Court Chief Justice Mark Cady. More information on tomorrow's hearing – including a link to the live webcast - [can be found here](http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/hearings/hearing.cfm?id=9b6937d5e931a0b792d258d9b3652fe2). Klobuchar, along with Senators John Cornyn and Richard Blumenthal, are also cosponsors of the bill.

In addition, Grassley is the author of bipartisan legislation that would allow the chief judge of federal trial and appellate courts to permit cameras in their courtrooms. The bill would direct the Judicial Conference, the principal policy-making entity for the federal courts, to draft nonbinding guidelines that judges can refer to in making a decision pertaining to the coverage of a particular case. It also instructs the Judicial Conference to issue mandatory guidelines for obscuring vulnerable witnesses such as undercover officers, victims of crime, and their families. Included in the bill are safeguards to protect vulnerable witnesses, to exclude jurors from broadcast, and to allow a judge to use his or her discretion in determining whether to allow cameras in the courtroom.

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