

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 1133

To provide for media coverage of Federal court proceedings.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 26, 2025

Mr. GRASSLEY (for himself, Ms. KLOBUCHAR, Mr. DURBIN, Mr. BLUMENTHAL, Mr. MARKEY, and Mr. CORNYN) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

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 2025”.

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

7 (a) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

8 (1) PRESIDING JUDGE.—The term “presiding
9 judge” means the judge presiding over the court
10 proceeding concerned. In proceedings in which more
11 than one judge participates, the presiding judge

1 shall be the chief judge or justice so participating.

2 If the chief judge or justice is not participating, the
3 presiding judge shall be the most senior active judge
4 or justice so participating.

5 (2) APPELLATE COURT OF THE UNITED
6 STATES.—The term “appellate court of the United
7 States” means any United States circuit court of ap-
8 peals and the Supreme Court of the United States.

9 (b) AUTHORITY OF PRESIDING JUDGE TO ALLOW
10 MEDIA COVERAGE OF COURT PROCEEDINGS.—

11 (1) AUTHORITY OF APPELLATE COURTS.—

12 (A) IN GENERAL.—Except as provided
13 under subparagraph (B), the presiding judge of
14 an appellate court of the United States may, at
15 the discretion of that judge, permit the
16 photographing, electronic recording, broad-
17 casting, or televising to the public of any court
18 proceeding over which that judge presides.

19 (B) EXCEPTION.—The presiding judge
20 shall not permit any action under subparagraph
21 (A), if—

22 (i) in the case of a proceeding involv-
23 ing only the presiding judge, that judge de-
24 termines the action would constitute a vio-

1 lation of the due process rights of any
2 party; or

3 (ii) in the case of a proceeding involv-
4 ing the participation of more than one
5 judge, a majority of the judges partici-
6 pating determine that the action would
7 constitute a violation of the due process
8 rights of any party.

9 (2) AUTHORITY OF DISTRICT COURTS.—

10 (A) IN GENERAL.—

11 (i) AUTHORITY.—Notwithstanding
12 any other provision of law, except as pro-
13 vided under clause (iii), the presiding judge
14 of a district court of the United States
15 may, at the discretion of that judge, per-
16 mit the photographing, electronic record-
17 ing, broadcasting, or televising to the pub-
18 lic of any court proceeding over which that
19 judge presides.

20 (ii) OBSCURING OF WITNESSES.—Ex-
21 cept as provided under clause (iii)—

22 (I) upon the request of any wit-
23 ness (other than a party) in a trial
24 proceeding, the court shall order the
25 face and voice of the witness to be

1 disguised or otherwise obscured in
2 such manner as to render the witness
3 unrecognizable to the broadcast audi-
4 ence of the trial proceeding; and

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

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

14 (I) if that judge determines the
15 action would constitute a violation of
16 the due process rights of any party;
17 and

18 (II) until the Judicial Conference
19 of the United States promulgates
20 mandatory guidelines under para-
21 graph (5).

22 (B) NO MEDIA COVERAGE OF JURORS.—
23 The presiding judge shall not permit the
24 photographing, electronic recording, broad-

1 casting, or televising of any juror in a trial pro-
 2 ceeding, or of the jury selection process.

3 (C) DISCRETION OF THE JUDGE.—The
 4 presiding judge shall have the discretion to ob-
 5 scure the face and voice of an individual, if
 6 good cause is shown that the photographing,
 7 electronic recording, broadcasting, or televising
 8 of the individual would threaten—

9 (i) the safety of the individual;

10 (ii) the security of the court;

11 (iii) the integrity of future or ongoing
 12 law enforcement operations; or

13 (iv) the interest of justice.

14 (D) SUNSET OF DISTRICT COURT AUTHOR-
 15 ITY.—The authority under this paragraph shall
 16 terminate 3 years after the date of the enact-
 17 ment of this Act.

18 (3) INTERLOCUTORY APPEALS BARRED.—The
 19 decision of the presiding judge under this subsection
 20 of whether or not to permit, deny, or terminate the
 21 photographing, electronic recording, broadcasting, or
 22 televising of a court proceeding may not be chal-
 23 lenged through an interlocutory appeal.

24 (4) ADVISORY GUIDELINES.—The Judicial Con-
 25 ference of the United States may promulgate advi-

1 sory guidelines to which a presiding judge, at the
2 discretion of that judge, may refer in making deci-
3 sions with respect to the management and adminis-
4 tration of photographing, recording, broadcasting, or
5 televising described under paragraphs (1) and (2).

6 (5) MANDATORY GUIDELINES.—Not later than
7 6 months after the date of enactment of this Act,
8 the Judicial Conference of the United States shall
9 promulgate mandatory guidelines that a presiding
10 judge is required to follow for obscuring of certain
11 vulnerable witnesses, including crime victims, minor
12 victims, families of victims, cooperating witnesses,
13 undercover law enforcement officers or agents, wit-
14 nesses subject to section 3521 of title 18, United
15 States Code, relating to witness relocation and pro-
16 tection, or minors under the age of 18 years. The
17 guidelines shall include procedures for determining,
18 at the earliest practicable time in any investigation
19 or case, which witnesses should be considered vulner-
20 able under this section.

21 (6) PROCEDURES.—In the interests of justice
22 and fairness, the presiding judge of the court in
23 which media use is desired has discretion to promul-
24 gate rules and disciplinary measures for the court-
25 room use of any form of media or media equipment

1 and the acquisition or distribution of any of the im-
2 ages or sounds obtained in the courtroom. The pre-
3 siding judge shall also have discretion to require
4 written acknowledgment of the rules by anyone indi-
5 vidually or on behalf of any entity before being al-
6 lowed to acquire any images or sounds from the
7 courtroom.

8 (7) NO BROADCAST OF CONFERENCES BE-
9 TWEEN ATTORNEYS AND CLIENTS.—There shall be
10 no audio pickup or broadcast of conferences which
11 occur in a court proceeding between attorneys and
12 their clients, between co-counsel of a client, between
13 adverse counsel, or between counsel and the pre-
14 siding judge, if the conferences are not part of the
15 official record of the proceedings.

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

19 (9) INHERENT AUTHORITY.—Nothing in this
20 Act shall limit the inherent authority of a court to
21 protect witnesses or clear the courtroom to preserve
22 the decorum and integrity of the legal process or
23 protect the safety of an individual.

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