

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1281

To allow media coverage of court proceedings.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 25, 1999

Mr. CHABOT (for himself, Mr. DELAHUNT, Mr. DELAY, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. WEXLER, Mr. HILL of Montana, Mr. BLAGOJEVICH, Mr. GEKAS, Mr. SCARBOROUGH, Mr. JONES of North Carolina, Mr. HILLEARY, Mr. PORTMAN, Mr. DIXON, Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland, Mr. GIBBONS, Mr. COBLE, Mr. ROTHMAN, Mr. GRAHAM, Mr. SALMON, Mr. ENGLISH, Mr. GONZALEZ, Mrs. MORELLA, Mr. HULSHOF, Mrs. CHENOWETH, Mr. WEINER, Mr. BAKER, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. TIERNEY, Mr. RAHALL, Mr. BRYANT, Mr. BORSKI, Mr. HEFLEY, Mr. TRAFICANT, Mr. BOEHNER, Mr. HAYES, Mr. MCCOLLUM, and Mr. ROGAN) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary

A BILL

To allow media coverage of 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 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
4 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

5 **SECTION. 1. AUTHORITY OF PRESIDING JUDGE TO ALLOW**
6 **MEDIA COVERAGE OF COURT PROCEEDINGS.**

7 (a) AUTHORITY OF APPELLATE COURTS.—Notwith-
8 standing any other provision of law, the presiding judge

1 of an appellate court of the United States may, in his or
2 her discretion, permit the photographing, electronic re-
3 cording, broadcasting, or televising to the public of court
4 proceedings over which that judge presides.

5 (b) AUTHORITY OF DISTRICT COURTS.—

6 (1) IN GENERAL.—Notwithstanding any other
7 provision of law, any presiding judge of a district
8 court of the United States may, in his or her discre-
9 tion, permit the photographing, electronic recording,
10 broadcasting, or televising to the public of court pro-
11 ceedings over which that judge presides.

12 (2) OBSCURING OF WITNESSES.—(A) Upon the
13 request of any witness in a trial proceeding other
14 than a party, the court shall order the face and voice
15 of the witness to be disguised or otherwise obscured
16 in such manner as to render the witness unrecogniz-
17 able to the broadcast audience of the trial pro-
18 ceeding.

19 (B) The presiding judge in a trial proceeding
20 shall inform each witness who is not a party that the
21 witness has the right to request that his or her
22 image and voice be obscured during the witness' tes-
23 timony.

24 (c) ADVISORY GUIDELINES.—The Judicial Con-
25 ference of the United States is authorized to promulgate

1 advisory guidelines to which a presiding judge, in his or
2 her discretion, may refer in making decisions with respect
3 to the management and administration of photographing,
4 recording, broadcasting, or televising described in sub-
5 sections (a) and (b).

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 As used in this Act:

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
12 shall be the senior active judge so participating or,
13 in the case of a circuit court of appeals, the senior
14 active circuit judge so participating, except that—

15 (A) in en banc sittings of any United
16 States circuit court of appeals, the presiding
17 judge shall be the chief judge of the circuit
18 whenever the chief judge participates; and

19 (B) in en banc sittings of the Supreme
20 Court of the United States, the presiding judge
21 shall be the Chief Justice whenever the Chief
22 Justice participates.

23 (2) **APPELLATE COURT OF THE UNITED**
24 **STATES.**—The term “appellate court of the United

1 States'' means any United States circuit court of ap-
2 peals and the Supreme Court of the United States.

3 **SEC. 3. SUNSET.**

4 The authority under section 1(b) shall terminate on
5 the date that is 3 years after the date of the enactment
6 of this Act.

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