

Calendar No. 444

119TH CONGRESS
2D 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

JUNE 23, 2026

Reported by Mr. GRASSLEY, 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 2025”.

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 one judge participates, the presiding judge
 5 shall be the chief judge or justice so participating.
 6 If the chief judge or justice is not participating, the
 7 presiding judge shall be the most senior active judge
 8 or justice so participating.

9 (2) APPELLATE COURT OF THE UNITED
 10 STATES.—The term “appellate court of the United
 11 States” means any United States circuit court of ap-
 12 peals and the Supreme Court of the United States.

13 (b) AUTHORITY OF PRESIDING JUDGE TO ALLOW
 14 MEDIA COVERAGE OF COURT PROCEEDINGS.—

15 (1) AUTHORITY OF APPELLATE COURTS.—

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

23 (B) EXCEPTION.—The presiding judge
 24 shall not permit any action under subparagraph
 25 (A), if—

(i) in the case of a proceeding involving only the presiding judge, that judge determines the action would constitute a violation of the due process rights of any party; or

(ii) in the case of a proceeding involving the participation of more than one judge, a majority of the judges participating determine that the action would constitute a violation of the due process rights of any party.

(2) AUTHORITY OF DISTRICT COURTS.—

(A) IN GENERAL.—

(i) AUTHORITY.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, except as provided under clause (iii), the presiding judge of a district court of the United States may, at the discretion of that judge, permit 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)—

1 (I) upon the request of any wit-
2 ness (other than a party) in a trial
3 proceeding, the court shall order the
4 face and voice of the witness to be
5 disguised or otherwise obscured in
6 such manner as to render the witness
7 unrecognizable to the broadcast audi-
8 ence of the trial proceeding; and

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

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

18 (I) if that judge determines the
19 action would constitute a violation of
20 the due process rights of any party;
21 and

22 (II) until the Judicial Conference
23 of the United States promulgates
24 mandatory guidelines under para-
25 graph (5).

1 (B) NO MEDIA COVERAGE OF JURORS.—

2 The presiding judge shall not permit the
3 photographing, electronic recording, broad-
4 casting, or televising of any juror in a trial pro-
5 ceeding, or of the jury selection process.

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

- 12 (i) the safety of the individual;
- 13 (ii) the security of the court;
- 14 (iii) the integrity of future or ongoing
15 law enforcement operations; or
- 16 (iv) the interest of justice.

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

21 (3) INTERLOCUTORY APPEALS BARRED.—The
22 decision of the presiding judge under this subsection
23 of whether or not to permit, deny, or terminate the
24 photographing, electronic recording, broadcasting, or

1 televising of a court proceeding may not be chal-
2 lenged through an interlocutory appeal.

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

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

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

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

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

24 (9) INHERENT AUTHORITY.—Nothing in this
25 Act shall limit the inherent authority of a court to

- 1 protect witnesses or clear the courtroom to preserve
- 2 the decorum and integrity of the legal process or
- 3 protect the safety of an individual.

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