

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. _____

To provide for media coverage of Federal court proceedings.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

Mr. GRASSLEY introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred
to the Committee on _____

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
12 shall be the chief judge or justice so participating.

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

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

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

10 (1) AUTHORITY OF APPELLATE COURTS.—

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

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

21 (i) in the case of a proceeding involv-
22 ing only the presiding judge, that judge de-
23 termines the action would constitute a vio-
24 lation of the due process rights of any
25 party; or

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

7 (2) AUTHORITY OF DISTRICT COURTS.—

8 (A) IN GENERAL.—

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

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

20 (I) upon the request of any wit-
21 ness (other than a party) in a trial
22 proceeding, the court shall order the
23 face and voice of the witness to be
24 disguised or otherwise obscured in
25 such manner as to render the witness

1 unrecognizable to the broadcast audi-
2 ence of the trial proceeding; and

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

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

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

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

20 (B) NO MEDIA COVERAGE OF JURORS.—
21 The presiding judge shall not permit the
22 photographing, electronic recording, broad-
23 casting, or televising of any juror in a trial pro-
24 ceeding, or of the jury selection process.

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

- 7 (i) the safety of the individual;
8 (ii) the security of the court;
9 (iii) the integrity of future or ongoing
10 law enforcement operations; or
11 (iv) the interest of justice.

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

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

22 (4) ADVISORY GUIDELINES.—The Judicial Con-
23 ference of the United States may promulgate advi-
24 sory guidelines to which a presiding judge, at the
25 discretion of that judge, may refer in making deci-

1 sions with respect to the management and adminis-
2 tration of photographing, recording, broadcasting, or
3 televising described under paragraphs (1) and (2).

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

19 (6) PROCEDURES.—In the interests of justice
20 and fairness, the presiding judge of the court in
21 which media use is desired has discretion to promul-
22 gate rules and disciplinary measures for the court-
23 room use of any form of media or media equipment
24 and the acquisition or distribution of any of the im-
25 ages or sounds obtained in the courtroom. The pre-

1 siding judge shall also have discretion to require
2 written acknowledgment of the rules by anyone indi-
3 vidually or on behalf of any entity before being al-
4 lowed to acquire any images or sounds from the
5 courtroom.

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

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

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