

UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE *on the* **JUDICIARY**
CHAIRMAN CHUCK GRASSLEY

Sunshine in the Courtroom Act, S.1133

What does the *Sunshine in the Courtroom Act* do?

Grants the presiding judge in all federal courts, including the Supreme Court, the discretion to allow cameras in federal courtrooms.

Why is it needed?

- Building trust requires education and awareness.
 - A small fraction of Americans (roughly 23%) have personal experience with the courts.
 - Public trust in the federal court system dropped to a record low of 35% in 2024.
 - Only 22% of Gen Z trusts the Supreme Court and the criminal justice system.
- Americans deserve co-equal transparency from co-equal branches.
 - Legislative branch proceedings have been recorded by camera since 1979 in the House and 1986 in the Senate, yet the same standard doesn't apply to the judicial branch.

What safeguards are included?

- Protects the identities of witnesses and jurors;
- Prohibits media coverage of private conversations;
- Provides the presiding judge(s) discretion to deny camera usage if determined it would interfere with a fair trial; and
- Requires the Judicial Conference to issue guidelines for protecting vulnerable witnesses.

“The judicial branch has a massive impact on our daily lives and the lives of generations to come, yet very few Americans get the chance to see our nation’s courts in action. Allowing cameras access to the federal courts would boost transparency and help Americans grow in confidence and understanding of the judiciary,” **said Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee**

At a preliminary hearing in the Charlie Kirk murder trial, Utah District Court Judge Tony Graf permitted camera access with some restrictions. Cameras must be located in the rear of the courtroom and can't zoom in on any individual at the counsel table. Grassley's *Sunshine in the Courtroom Act* would grant all federal judges the same discretion used by state judge Tony Graf in the Kirk trial, allowing cameras in federal courtrooms while ensuring fair trials.

Utah officially allowed still cameras in state trial courtrooms in April 1990 and video cameras in April 1991. In most instances, live video broadcasts are prohibited in federal courtrooms.

