

The impact of courtroom cameras on the judicial process

Scott Campbell
National University

Bryan Hance
National University

James Larson
National University

ABSTRACT

In the United States our Constitution guarantees that criminal trials are open to the public. This is a fundamental right confirmed in the 6th Amendment of the Bill of Rights. The question, of course is, how far does this right extend. When the Constitution was written the only form of media was the written press. Over the years that has changed and we now have radio, television, and the internet. This has had a tremendous impact on the judicial process, especially in the case of high profile criminal trials. Judges must now determine the level of media coverage that will be allowed in the courtroom. Open to the public does not necessarily mean open to television and video cameras, or even still cameras. The very presence of cameras in the courtroom can be a distraction, especially when those actively involved in the trial know they may be on live national television.

This research will be to determine if the presence of courtroom cameras in criminal trials has any impact on the judicial process. The research will include a survey sent to judges consisting of questions pertaining to courtroom cameras and the impact on witnesses testimony, delays in the proceedings, additional expenses, etc. A literature review will be conducted that looks at cases with courtroom cameras, current practices, and previous comments made by legal scholars, members of the media, judges, and attorneys. The outcome of the study is to make recommendations about the use of courtroom cameras based on the research.

Keywords: courtroom cameras, 6th Amendment, judicial process, criminal trials, witness testimony, right to a fair trial.