



CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE COST ESTIMATE

May 12, 2010

S. 657

Sunshine in the Courtroom Act of 2009

As reported by the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on April 29, 2010

S. 657 would authorize U.S. district and appellate judges and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court to permit the photographing, recording, broadcasting, and televising of court proceedings if such activities would not violate the due process rights of the parties involved. The authority provided to district court judges under S. 657 would expire three years after the date of enactment. The bill also would authorize the Judicial Conference of the United States to promulgate guidelines for obscuring the identity of certain types of witnesses from a broadcast audience.

The federal court system generally prohibits the use of still cameras, television cameras, and other electronic recording devices in federal courtrooms, and the Judicial Conference of the United States opposes the use of cameras in federal trial court proceedings. However, a few courtrooms have been equipped with those devices at costs ranging from about \$25,000 to \$75,000 for each room. Assuming that a relatively small number of courtrooms would be equipped with media devices, we estimate that implementing S. 657 would cost around \$1 million each year, subject to the availability of appropriated funds. (Costs would be greater to the extent that more judges permit the use of cameras, but under the bill a court could require that any such accommodation be made without public expense.) Enacting the bill would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures would not apply.

S. 657 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act and would not affect the budgets of state, local, or tribal governments.

The CBO staff contact for this estimate is Mark Grabowicz. The estimate was approved by Theresa Gullo, Deputy Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.