

NEBRASKA SUPREME COURT

Office of Public Information



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Supreme Court Authorizes Television News Cameras in Trial Courts

Judges Dan Bryan and Paul Korslund of the 1st Judicial District are establishing a pilot project to test the use of still and video news cameras in their courtrooms. The Nebraska Supreme Court has approved local court rules for the two judges to allow expanded news coverage by broadcasters for trials held in courtrooms where they preside.

“We have, of course, always welcomed the press into the trial court with their notepads and pens. In November of 2007, we asked the Supreme Court to approve rules allowing radio newscasters into the courtroom with their audio equipment. The experiment went so well we are more than willing to make room for television cameras, should the news stations want to cover cases in our area,” said Judge Dan Bryan.

News stations will have restrictions on which portions of a trial can be covered, similar to the restrictions developed by the Iowa Supreme Court. All proceedings required by law to be private will be strictly prohibited from media coverage. In addition, expanded media coverage of cases with juveniles, child custody, police informants, undercover agents and similar witnesses are prohibited unless consent of all parties to a case is obtained.

Judge Paul Korslund remarked, “I hope this experiment will help inform the public about the workings of the judicial system and remove any mystery about what happens in a courtroom. Our intent is to provide Nebraskans with a greater understanding of their court system without putting undue pressure on litigants. Courtrooms are, after all, open to the public.”

The Nebraska Supreme Court has hosted cameras in oral argument sessions for nearly a quarter century as have most state supreme courts. At the trial court level, policy varies from state to state

Chief Justice Mike Heavican said he “couldn’t be more pleased” with the willingness of Judges Bryan and Korslund to develop a pilot project for the broadcasters. “The right of citizens to a fair trial is of utmost importance. The right of citizens to see courts at work is also an important goal. Allowing television cameras into our courtrooms provides us with a mechanism to become more visible and show Nebraskans the very important work of this branch of government.”

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