

October 3, 2005

**BY HAND**

The Honorable John G. Roberts  
Chief Justice of the United States  
The Supreme Court  
1 First Street, N.E.  
Washington, D.C. 20543

Dear Mr. Chief Justice:

Senator Arlen Specter's legislation and the several questions raised by other Senators during your confirmation hearings are indications of the great interest and raised expectations many people have regarding television access to the Court as you begin your tenure.

Knowing that you are well familiar with C-SPAN and our longstanding interest in this topic, I am writing to detail C-SPAN's commitment to coverage of the Court and to offer our technical expertise to you and the Court to help facilitate any exploration you may undertake of televised Court proceedings.

In 1988, C-SPAN committed to Chief Justice Rehnquist that if the Court would allow camera access, C-SPAN would televise every oral argument *in its entirety*, without editing and without commentary. Our commitment still stands.

In 1988, we also participated in the first and only demonstration of television equipment in the Chamber. We would be pleased to organize a new demonstration using the latest digital equipment and would offer C-SPAN technical staff and producers to the Court for any consultation it may request regarding the equipment, logistics, and cost of televising arguments in the Chamber.

Our network's 26 years of experience in producing long-form television, combined with the quality and small size of today's digital television equipment virtually guarantee the Court a high-quality and discreet technical system.

I have enclosed a description of C-SPAN's coverage of the federal judiciary and of our relationship with the Court over the past twenty years that demonstrates our commitment to complete and fair coverage of the Court. That commitment extends to assisting you in any way we can, should you wish to explore televised coverage of oral arguments.

With best regards,

Brian P. Lamb

Enclosure

CC: Kathy Arberg  
Public Information Officer

**The Supreme Court of the United States  
and  
The C-SPAN Networks**

**C-SPAN's Programming:**

- Televises all major public speaking appearances of justices of the Supreme Court (that are open to camera coverage) on a gavel-to-gavel basis.
- At C-SPAN's request, the Court provided same-day audio coverage of the oral argument in *Bush v. Palm Beach County Canvassing Board* and in *Bush v. Gore* -- the 2000 presidential election cases. C-SPAN provided complete coverage of both oral arguments as they were released and again later in the day.
- C-SPAN provided complete audio-only coverage (with repeats) of the seven subsequent oral arguments the Chief Justice described as of such "heightened public interest" that the audio record was released on a same-day basis. These cases included the University of Michigan affirmative action case, and the campaign finance reform case.
- When cases of national interest are argued before the 2nd and 9th Circuit Courts of Appeal (the two federal courts that regularly permit camera coverage of oral arguments), C-SPAN provides gavel-to-gavel coverage.
- Produced and televised the historic and well-received public discussion featuring Associate Justices O'Connor, Scalia, and Breyer. The April 2005 event was sponsored by the National Archives and the Constitution Center (Philadelphia).
- Televises all Supreme Court nominee Senate confirmation hearings on a gavel-to-gavel basis, beginning in 1981 with the nomination of Sandra Day O'Connor.
- "America and the Courts," a weekly program since 1985, focuses on the judiciary with an emphasis on the Supreme Court. The series is an attempt to give C-SPAN's television audience as much information about the judicial branch despite infrequent camera access to courts in general, especially as compared with the legislative and executive branches of government.

**C-SPAN's Relationship With the Court:**

In 1988 C-SPAN made a commitment to then-Chief Justice Rehnquist that if the Court were to allow camera access C-SPAN would televise the entirety of every oral argument scheduled by the Court. That commitment still stands.

Also in 1988, C-SPAN joined other news organizations to organize a demonstration for the justices in the Court's chamber of the equipment and personnel required to provide good quality televised coverage of oral arguments.

- In 1991 C-SPAN was instrumental in advocating and then implementing a 4-year experiment authorized by the Judicial Conference to test television coverage of civil cases before two federal Courts of Appeal and six District Courts.
- For the last 20 years C-SPAN has regularly donated to the Court's archives videotape copies of its Supreme Court coverage. To date several hundred hours of coverage have been donated.
- In 1987 the Court permitted C-SPAN to originate live interview and call-in programs from its Press Room. The programs featured journalists, attorneys and Court staff discussing the work of the Court and its operations.