

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2015

The Honorable John G. Roberts Jr.
Chief Justice of the United States
Washington, D.C., 20543

Dear Chief Justice Roberts,

With the upcoming and historic decision on same-sex marriage in mind, we write today to urge the Supreme Court to provide the American public greater access to the arguments and decisions of the nation's highest court by allowing video and live audio broadcasts of its proceedings.

Today, every American has access to the happenings and proceedings of the legislative and the executive branches of our government through C-SPAN. However, even in 2015, one branch of our government remains almost completely closed off from the public eye: the U.S. Supreme Court. People may disagree on the outcome of any given case, but we can all agree that the American public is better served when all three branches of our government are transparent and accessible. The opportunity to view the high court's cases in real time would greatly expand the Court's accessibility to average Americans and provide historic and educational value.

Furthermore, greater public access to the Supreme Court will undoubtedly lead to greater accountability and a better understanding of our country's judicial system.

The Supreme Court makes too many important decisions to deny the American people the opportunity to view its proceedings. The recent decision of the Supreme Court to rule on the issue of same-sex marriage is a primary example of a significant case that the public would greatly benefit from being able to observe firsthand. Decisions like this deeply affect the lives of millions of Americans and can change the course of American history. Allowing video and live audio will give more Americans the ability to closely follow the proceedings as they occur. Preserving these arguments via video recordings will also provide future generations of Americans the opportunity to watch historic arguments instead of simply reading about them in their history textbooks. Given advances in technology, there is no reason video and live audio should remain a taboo practice at the nation's highest court.

To describe the public's current access to Supreme Court proceedings as limited would be an understatement. The Court's public-seating area accommodates less than 400 visitors. For those who are lucky enough to visit the Court in person, most receive just three minutes to watch proceedings before being ushered out of the courtroom to make room for the next group waiting in line. Recent high-profile arguments on marriage equality illustrate just how limited access can be. Americans were forced to line up days in advance for just the chance of hearing those arguments in real time. Some even reported paying thousands of dollars to line-sitters for a better chance at gaining a seat in the courtroom. The vast majority of Americans have neither the time nor the means to travel to the nation's capital and wait in line for the slim chance at gaining access to the Court. That's why it's time for the Supreme Court to follow the lead of state and

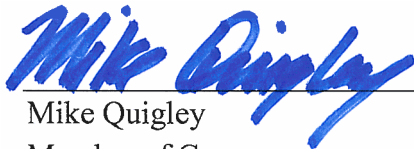
federal courts around the country in allowing video and live audio broadcasts of court proceedings.

Some may argue that allowing video and live audio broadcasts could influence the tone of arguments and invite sound bite interpretations of court proceedings. But in the year 2015, it is next to impossible to hide from the digital age of modern media with most court coverage primarily being delivered via news snippets, blogs, and social media. Real time access to arguments will allow the public to hear the entire story and make their own decisions about what is being argued before the Court.

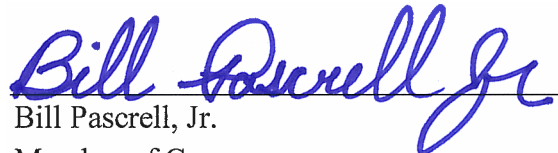
It is long past time for the public to have greater access to Supreme Court decisions. There is no doubt that the decision on the constitutionality of same-sex marriage will have a lasting impact on public policy and the lives of countless Americans. Accordingly, it is only reasonable for the American people to have an opportunity to hear firsthand the arguments and opinions that will shape their society for years to come.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

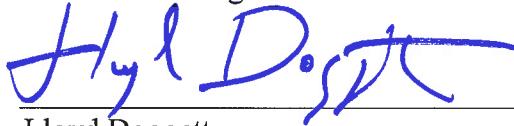
Sincerely,



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



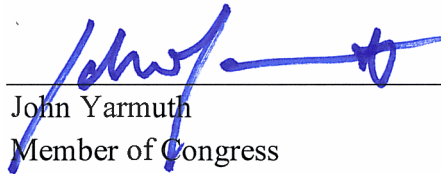
Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



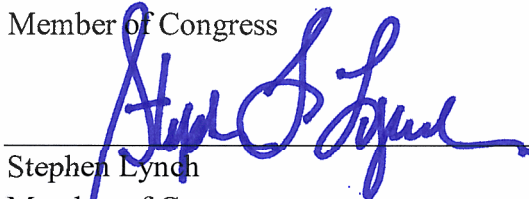
Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



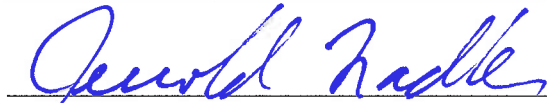
Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



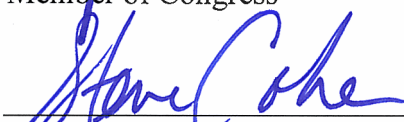
John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



Stephen Lynch
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress