

CAMERAS IN THE COURT

Action is taken under the LWVUS position on Individual Liberties.

In 1989, the League successfully supported passage of legislation to extend the experiment allowing cameras in the court for a two-year period. The U.S. Constitution guarantees the right to a public trial, and we took action under the National League commitment to individual liberties. Action on this item is also consistent with our continued efforts to enhance public understanding of, and confidence in, the judiciary. In May 1991 the legislation authorizing the experiment expired. The Senate and Assembly could not agree on the issue of non-party witness veto power over audio-visual coverage of themselves while on the stand. The Senate version, supported by the League, mandated that witnesses who are not parties in a case should have this protection. A year later, 1992, the League successfully supported passage of legislation restoring audio visual coverage of court proceedings on an experimental basis through January 1995, with restrictions on the coverage of witnesses in criminal trials. In 1995, the Legislature extended camera access for another 30 months.

In June 1997, the Legislature failed to act on legislation to authorize cameras in the courts on either a permanent or a trial basis. With expiration of the experiment, League has no position on cameras in the courts.