



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

On Eve Of Trump Arraignment, Elected Officials & Legal Experts Call For NYS Budget To Allow Cameras In Courtrooms

BRAD HOYLMAN-SIGAL April 2, 2023

| ISSUE: **DONALD TRUMP, CAMERAS IN COURTROOMS, GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY**



NEW YORK — Ahead of former President Donald Trump’s arraignment, a coalition of elected officials and legal experts called for the passage of legislation ([S.160](#)) in the New York State Budget to allow cameras in courtrooms, which the State Senate endorsed in its one-house resolution.

New York is one of only two states in the country that does not allow cameras in courtrooms during trials. New York's law dates back to the 1930s, when cameras were loud, large and distracting. Cameras in the courtroom allow the public to see how laws are interpreted, how justice is served, how victims, witnesses and defendants are treated, and how New Yorker's tax dollars are spent in New York courts. When coverage is restricted to those only in the physical courtroom, public accountability is compromised.

New York's state budget is currently under negotiation, and the State Fiscal Year began April 1. The State Senate included S.160 in its one-house budget resolution, a statement of the Senate Majority's positions going into final negotiations. The coalition urged the State Assembly and Governor to accept the measure in the final enacted budget.

In 48 hours, former president Trump will likely be arraigned on suspected charges of business fraud. For the first time in United States history, an American president will face prosecution on criminal charges. The coalition rallied for the right of the public to witness this historic moment.

Led by State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal (D - WFP, Manhattan), the group included elected officials: Assembly Member David Weprin, Assembly Member Tony Simone, Council Member Gale Brewer, and advocates: Dan Novack, Chair, NYS Bar Association Committee on Media Law; Diane Kennedy, New York News Publishers Association.

State Senator Brad Hoylman-Sigal said: "As the media capital of the world – and the venue for the arraignment of Donald Trump – we must change this outdated law to allow the public to witness trials. With a first-of-its-kind trial on the horizon, there's no time to waste in opening the doors of the courthouse to the media and the American public."

U.S. Representative Jerry Nadler said: “Transparency is essential to our democracy. Without televised access, the courts are effectively out of reach to most of the public. That is why I have long sponsored legislation to require cameras in the federal courts. I hope that New York will follow the lead of other states and ensure that the public is able to witness important judicial proceedings in real time.”

Dan Novack, Chair of NYS Bar Association Committee on Media Law, said: “Public access is the bedrock of our justice system — but its promise is hollow if constrained by geographic proximity, workday availability and space constraints. Without cameras, the vast majority of the public is effectively denied access. Senator Hoylman-Sigal's legislation will take New York from last to first place in leading on transparency.”

Assembly Member David Weprin said: “The people of New York are entitled to greater transparency in how our systems of government, law, and justice function. Having cameras in the courtroom is long overdue, and New York should join the 48 other states that provide for the public to bear witness to courtroom proceedings. I will continue to advocate with my partners in the Senate and Assembly to see that this measure is adopted and enacted.”

Denise Kronstadt, Interim Executive Director of Fund for Modern Courts, said: "As one of only two states that completely bar camera coverage of trial-court proceedings, New York is a distant outlier. New Yorkers reside in the dark. Enhancing the public's ability to see court proceedings, especially now, will lead to greater accountability, trust in our judiciary, opportunities for change and transparency in our democracy. A vibrant democracy requires an informed, educated, and engaged citizenry with access to unfiltered information. We support Sen. Hoylman's advocacy to include cameras in the courts in this year's budget. It's long overdue."

Assembly Member Tony Simone said: "The case against Donald Trump will be one of the most watched court cases in our nation's history. This case will undoubtedly test our judicial system and spawn innumerable conspiracy theories that will feed right wing extremism. That is why opening up the courtroom to the eyes and ears of every American is critical to ensure the truth is the only story told of this case."

Council Member Gale Brewer said: "I agree with The Fund for Modern Courts, an organization that believes that New York should cease to be an "outlier" and allow cameras for televised coverage of court proceedings. Any law that does not allow the public to witness courtroom proceedings should be overturned. The immediate issue is for the public to be able to view coverage of Donald Trump's arraignment and any trial, but the long-term concern is that New York courthouses will continue to operate without the transparency that audiovisual coverage brings."

Diane Kennedy, President of New York News Publishers Association, said: "Every New Yorker has an interest in the fairness and effectiveness of our court system. Restoring the ability to view audiovisual coverage of court proceedings would assure New Yorkers that the administration of justice in New York is transparent and equitable."

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