

OPINION

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Embrace cameras in halls of Congress

Daniel H. Erskine - White Plains, N.Y.

Apparently, federal legislators are just as afraid of the camera lens as are their compatriots on the federal judiciary. Why this great fear of transparency in public proceedings ("It's 2007. Do you know what your lawmakers are up to?" Our view, Open government debate, Wednesday)?

We should no longer view TV cameras as a frightening intrusion into public affairs, but as a welcome companion providing an accurate picture of American public events.

Federal officials say they fear editorializing by the media and seek greater control of the image citizens receive. Americans, however, denounce foreign governments for manipulating the TV images received by their citizens. It is time to take our own advice and let loose the bonds restricting how legislative proceedings are televised.

In his opposing view, Donald Wolfensberger, director of the Congress Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, argues that manipulation by federal legislators is preferable to media control of the camera lens ("Keep cameras focused," Opposing view). But fear of ridicule and loss of dignity are not legitimate reasons for binding the camera operator's hands. These two conditions are part of being a public figure.

The American public cherishes its freedom to receive and discuss information. It is time American federal institutions embrace television as a valid means to inform citizens.

Posted at 12:07 AM/ET, January 05, 2007 in [Letter to the editor](#), [Politics](#), [Government - Letters](#), [Reforming Washington - Letters](#) | [Permalink](#)

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