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Section: EDITORIAL

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Cameras In Court?

Consider Privacy

The Sept. 7 editorial "Yes To Cameras In Courtrooms" fails to address a number of issues in the debate about liberalizing Connecticut rules on public access to judicial proceedings.

In an era when most prospective litigants abhor entering into court proceedings -- favoring instead clandestine alternative dispute-resolution mechanisms -- any measures introduced into Connecticut procedure should be sensitive to this.

New measures should also address that the public interest in knowing the financial details of a high-profile divorce, or the details in child abuse and neglect cases, may not rise to the level of presumptively "need to know" by the public.

Such decisions to televise and permit public access to court files should be taken after careful consideration of state and federal constitutional issues -- otherwise, Connecticut citizens, like those of Arizona, may be appearing on an ABC broadcast as they deliberate the fate of a criminal defendant.

Courts are public forums, but citizens should retain certain defined privacy rights in the papers filed in such institutions to ensure an adequate balance between the public's interest in adjudication and the parties' faith in the litigation process.

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