

Hon. John G. Roberts, Jr.
Chief Justice of the United States
Supreme Court of the United States
One First Street NE
Washington, D.C., 20543

July 15, 2020

Dear Chief Justice Roberts:

We write to urge you to continue providing live audio access to oral arguments when the Supreme Court reconvenes on the first Monday in October.

We supported your decision this spring to allow remote arguments in light of the pandemic and were pleased that a live audio feed was offered to the public. We understand that the Court had long resisted calls to broadcast live, wary that justices or attorneys would grandstand or the American public would misunderstand the proceedings, so we were heartened to find these fears were not realized in May. Instead, when Americans tuned in to the arguments, they got a clear sense of the gravity of the deliberations and the thoughtfulness of the justices.

Real-time broadcasts not only give the public direct access to an engaging, intellectual bench; they also diminish the ability of partisan interests to color a case in ways that serve narrow ends. They offer civics lessons that cannot be replicated under the old rules, where only 50 to 100 members of the public gain entry to an argument and with audio released on Fridays being of limited use in the modern-day news cycle.

Live audio helps America understand the Supreme Court. We believe that if continued, it will benefit the institution – and the civic health of the country – immensely. We look forward to your consideration.

Sincerely,

American Society of Magazine Editors
Fix the Court
Free Law Project
Government Information Watch
National Press Foundation
National Press Photographers Association
National Security Counselors
News Leaders Association

Niskanen Center
Open the Government
Project on Government Oversight
R Street Institute
Radio Television Digital News Association
Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press
Society of Professional Journalists
Tully Center at Syracuse University