

November 16, 2011

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

Dear Chief Justice Roberts:

As organizations and individuals dedicated to transparency in government, we write to urge you to allow televising of oral arguments in the three cases before the Court addressing the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, *Nat'l Fed'n of Indep. Bus. v. Sebelius*, No. 11-393, *Florida v. U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Serv.*, No. 11, 400, and *U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Serv. v. Florida*, No. 11-398. These cases present some of the most significant issues to come before this Court in modern times, and the Court's resolution of these matters will have an enormous impact on our entire country.

The importance of these cases to the American public cannot be denied. Indeed, the Court at least implicitly recognized their gravity by scheduling five and one-half hours for oral argument. The issue of access to affordable health care strikes at the core of our relationship with our government, especially in this time of great economic turmoil. Further, the cases involve weighty questions regarding the right of the federal government to mandate both state and individual action.

The public needs and deserves to watch how the Court deals with these issues. As former Judge Kenneth W. Starr wrote recently in advocating for opening up the Supreme Court to cameras, "[d]emocracy's first principles strongly support the people's right to know how their government works." Kenneth W. Starr, Open Up High Court to Cameras, *New York Times*, Oct. 3, 2011. That right extends to the business of the Supreme Court, a court that "issues decisions that profoundly affect the nation." *Id.*

Quite simply, the entire nation shares an interest in how the Court will resolve the thorny, yet fundamental issues raised by the Affordable Care Act. Thousands of Americans, if not more, would have a great interest in watching this momentous argument, yet the Court has seating for only approximately 250 visitors. In a matter of this magnitude, citizens should have the opportunity to assess the arguments themselves and in real time, rather than being forced to rely upon later news reports. Please let the nation share a front-row seat by opening up the hearing to cameras.

Very truly yours,

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Feminists for Free Expression
Government Accountability Project
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isolon.org
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OMB Watch
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Society of Professional Journalists
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