

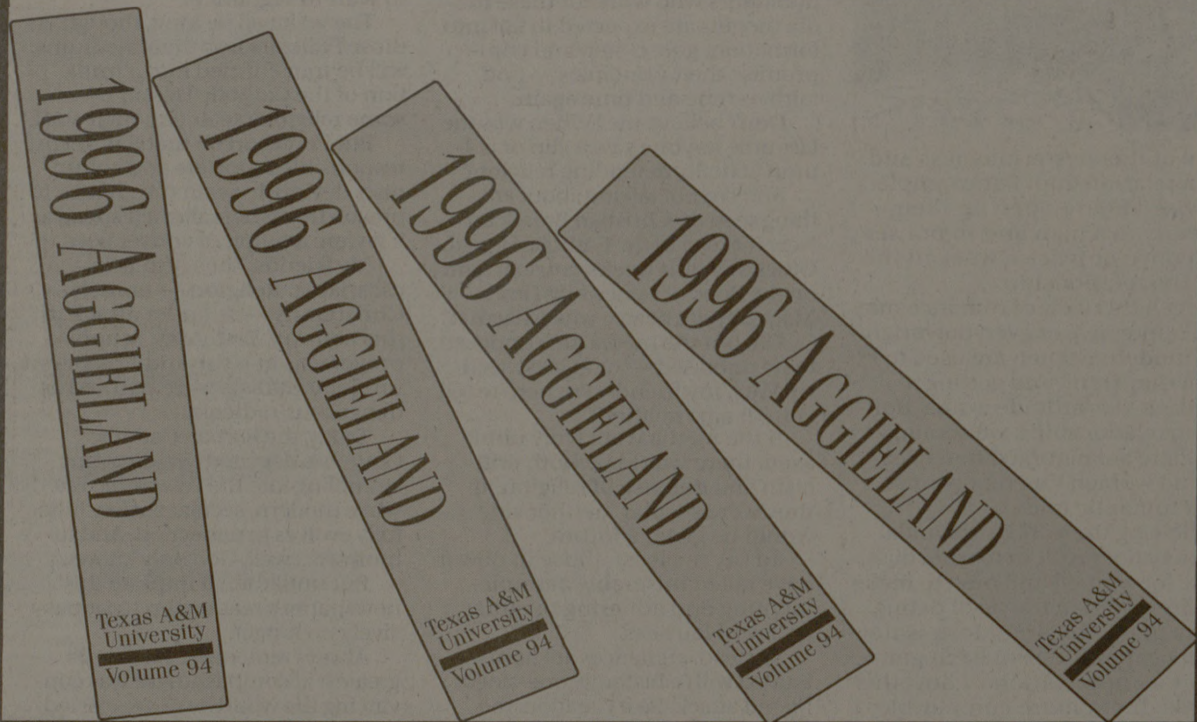
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5th Circuit bans cameras, tape recorders in courtrooms

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — The 5th Circuit Court of Appeals has become the fifth federal appellate court to ban all cameras and tape recorders from its courtrooms.

The New Orleans-based appellate court, which hears cases from Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi, joined appellate courts in the 1st, 7th, 10th and 11th circuits in formally banning television cameras, still photography and tape recorders.

Cameras currently are not allowed in the 5th Circuit's courtrooms, but earlier this year the United States Judicial Conference gave the 12 federal circuit courts discretion to permit them.

Two federal appeals courts — the New York-based 2nd Circuit and the San Francisco-based 9th Circuit — allow coverage of their proceedings by still cameras, radio and television.

The 5th Circuit's decision on Oct. 18 disappointed news media representatives, but other lawyers offered approval.

"I think the court has missed a wonderful opportunity to edu-

cate the citizens of our circuit on the challenging and important work that the court does," said Jack Weiss, a New Orleans media attorney.

In appeals courts, lawyers for each side present timed arguments and answer questions from the judges. There is no testimony or evidence presented.

"When you are talking about cameras in a trial court, you must consider the effect on witnesses and jurors," Weiss said. "In an appellate court, like the 5th Circuit, the effect on witnesses and jurors is not even an issue."

Susan Cowger, a lawyer in the appellate section of the U.S. Attorney's office for the Northern District of Texas, said she believes the public already has adequate access to the court's proceedings.

"It's very much the kind of thing that lends itself to a transcript, which you can buy, and there's always enough room to watch an argument," Ms. Cowger said. "Given that there's plenty of access for news professionals, it's no big deal."

John LaVern, president of Louisiana Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and director of the public defenders office in Casieue Parish, said he was pleased with the decision to ban cameras.

"I just don't think there's a need for it," LaVern said. "It doesn't add to the process."

The Judicial Conference's rule-making authority of federal judiciary. The conference decision did not apply to U.S. Supreme Court or federal district courts.

The Judicial Council of the Circuit already has banned cameras in federal district courts in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas.

Fifth Circuit Clerk of Court Charles Fulbruge III said he will not disclose how each circuit judge voted on the ban.

The 2nd and 9th circuits are the only appellate courts to participate in a three-year pilot program permitting cameras in some federal courts. Six federal district courts also participated in the national experiment, which began in 1994.

Salary gap concerns lawmakers

AUSTIN (AP) — Legislative leaders say they'd like to see teachers make as much money as coaches, but that decision ultimately is up to local school districts.

"If the local school district chooses to pay their high school football coach more than they pay their teachers, that's part of local control," said House Public Education Committee Chairman Paul Sadler, D-Henderson.

"If the local community allows that to happen, then the taxpayers are getting what they want — in theory at least," he said. "I personally have questioned the practice for a long time. Not that I think coaches are overpaid, but rather that teachers are underpaid."

An Associated Press analysis of 1995-96 records for 4A and 5A schools found a large gap between the salaries of teachers and coaches. Coaches earn \$54,000 on average; teachers typically make between \$31,000 and \$32,000.

Sadler and others noted that the 1995 education law raised the minimum salary scale for teachers and tied it to the state expenditure per student. The price tag for the first two years was about \$292 million.

While a good step, Sadler said, "It will not increase

enough to catch up with the difference between coaches' salaries and teachers' salaries. Although we wish that would happen, it won't."

Gov. George W. Bush said large salary discrepancies may exist but "by and large, funding is fair."

"Just from a general look, a lot of times the disparity in salary had to do with hours worked and amount of miles logged in travel," he said.

Bush said he wouldn't promise an additional raise for teachers in the coming legislative session because he couldn't guarantee it would pass.

"I think it's going to be hard to ever pay a good teacher what he or she is worth," he said. "You can't pay for somebody's heart, or as much as they put into the classroom."

Richard Kouri, president of the Texas State Teachers Association, said educators were encouraged by 1995 changes in teacher salary.

But that is likely to be enough to meet the goal of raising the average Texas teacher salary to the national level, Kouri said. In 1995-96, the average U.S. teacher salary was \$37,846, while the Texas average was \$32,000.

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Nov. 2 only \$59/70*
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*Trip includes: transportation, rental of group camping equipment, climbing equipment, camping permits and instruction.

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*price for Rec non-member