

# Joint Judiciary Committee Considerations for HBo093 (2026)

## 1 Courts Are Moving Toward Online Access — Carefully

Courts are not opposed to online access.

Current efforts emphasize phased implementation, redaction standards, judicial discretion, and protection of sensitive data. The courts must also be mindful of existing resource limitations, including appropriations and staffing levels, which play a critical role in the functionality and rollout speed of a remote public access system.

This bill short-circuits that careful process and substitutes a legislative mandate for judicial expertise.

This bill assumes that more access automatically means better justice. In reality, justice depends on trust, privacy, and people's willingness to come to court without fear of exploitation. Until we can guarantee meaningful protections, opening the floodgates to online viewing and streaming does more harm than good.

## 2 Transparency Is Important — But This Bill Goes Too Far, Too Fast

The courts already recognize the value of transparency and are actively working toward responsible online access to records. Circuit courts are still in the process of implementing secure, controlled systems with redaction protocols and safeguards. This bill leapfrogs over those safeguards, mandating broad public internet access before courts are ready to protect sensitive data. Transparency must be balanced with privacy, safety, and the integrity of the judicial process.

*Transparency should increase trust in the courts—not expose citizens to harm.*

## 3 Privacy Concerns for Ordinary People

Court records are not limited to criminals or high-profile issues—they involve everyday citizens:

- Divorcing spouses
- Victims of domestic violence
- Small business owners
- Parents in custody disputes
- Individuals in probate, debt, or employment cases
- Streaming proceedings and searchable records would expose:
  - Intimate family matters
  - Medical and mental health information
  - Financial struggles and business disputes

Many people come to court because they have no choice, not because they consent to public exposure.

*Going to court should not mean forfeiting your right to privacy.*

## 4 Risk of Data Mining, Identity Theft, & Exploitation

Court filings routinely include high-value personal data, such as:

- Dates of birth
- Social Security numbers
- Financial account information
- Home addresses and business details
- Opening mass online access creates a gold mine for third parties:
  - Data brokers
  - Identity thieves
  - Scammers

Once scraped, this data can be resold indefinitely, with no ability for courts or individuals to retrieve or correct it.

*The question isn't whether this information will be mined—it's how fast and by whom.*

## 5 Court Hearings Are Not Entertainment

Live-streamed hearings risk being:

- Clipped
- Mocked
- Monetized on social media platforms

Parties, witnesses, and even judges could become content, not participants in a serious legal process.

This degrades the dignity of the courts, public confidence in the justice system, and the willingness of witnesses to testify truthfully. ***Courtrooms are for justice—not clicks, likes, and ad revenue.*** Existing court rules are designed to maintain order in and outside the courtroom, which require all parties to offer consent before audio recording can be conducted (Rule 803, Uniform Rules for District Courts of Wyoming; Rule 5, Rules of the Supreme Court of Wyoming).

The courtroom is open for non-confidential cases, but at least the parties have an idea who is attending and can prepare more appropriately when they can see the public watching their case.

***Courts are not opposed to online access to court records.***

**The creation of a remote public access system would require substantial up-front appropriations and continual appropriations to maintain. While the Judicial Branch values and supports transparency efforts, its existing resources cannot support the expedited timeline sought by HB0093.**

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